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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	08/04 Jobless claims rise, fewer job openings
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/economy-jobless-claims-65cdacf3a3f1a3c0f34f72b8b7bf4c39">https://apnews.com/article/economy-jobless-claims-65cdacf3a3f1a3c0f34f72b8b7bf4c39</a>
GIST	WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans applied for jobless benefits last week as the number of unemployed continues to rise modestly, though the labor market remains one of the strongest parts of the U.S. economy.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending July 30 rose by 6,000 to 260,000 from the previous week's 254,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-time applications generally reflect layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which evens out the weekly ups and downs, also rose from the previous week, to 254,750.

The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending July 23 rose by 48,000 from the previous week, to 1,416,000. That figure has been near 50-year lows for months.

On Tuesday, the Labor Department reported that American employers [posted fewer job openings in June](#) as the economy contends with persistently high inflation and rising interest rates.

Job openings fell to a still-high 10.7 million in June from 11.3 million in May. Job openings, which never exceeded 8 million in a month before last year, had topped 11 million every month from December through May before dipping in June.

The Labor Department's jobs report for July, due out Friday, is expected to show that employers tacked on another 250,000 jobs last month, which would be a healthy number in normal times but would be the lowest since December 2020, when the global economy was being ravaged by the pandemic.

Economists expect the unemployment rate to hold at 3.6% for the fifth straight month.

Though the labor market is still considered strong, there have been some high-profile layoffs announced recently by Tesla, Netflix, Carvana, Redfin and Coinbase. A host of other companies, particularly in the tech sector, have announced hiring freezes.

Other indicators point to some weakness in the U.S. economy. The government said last week that the [U.S. economy shrank 0.9%](#) in the second quarter, the second straight quarterly contraction.

Consumer prices are still soaring, up 9.1% in June compared with a year earlier, the biggest yearly increase in four decades. In response, the [Federal Reserve raised its main borrowing rate](#) by another three-quarters of a point last week. That follows June's three-quarter point hike and another half-point increase in May.

Higher rates have already sent home sales tumbling, made the prospect of buying a new car more burdensome and pushed credit card rates up.

All of those factors paint a divergent and confusing picture of the post-pandemic economy: Inflation is hammering household budgets, forcing consumers to pull back on spending, and growth is weakening, heightening fears the economy could fall into recession.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Canada military to train Ukraine forces</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-canada-armed-forces-canadian-884821ad3ec08c0659186957920949be">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-canada-armed-forces-canadian-884821ad3ec08c0659186957920949be</a>
GIST	<p>OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Canada is sending military trainers to the United Kingdom to teach Ukrainians how to fight invading Russian forces, Defense Minister Anita Anand said Wednesday.</p> <p>Up to 225 members of the Canadian Armed Forces will eventually be based in the U.K. for an initial period of four months, said Anand. They will work alongside counterparts from Britain, the Netherlands and New Zealand in training Ukrainian troops on the basics of soldiering.</p> <p>“This is an all hands on deck moment for allies and partners that support Ukraine,” Anand said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.</p>

An earlier Canadian military training mission based in Ukraine was suspended only weeks before the invasion began.

That mission, which also included 225 Canadian military trainers, was launched in 2014 after Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula and started supporting pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The federal government says the mission, known as Operation Unifier, helped train more than 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers before all Canadian troops were withdrawn ahead of Russia's attack.

About 90 Canadian soldiers will head to the U.K. on August 12.

"Ukraine desires more troops and weapons," Anand said. "This will assist with their training of new recruits."

Canada has contributed more than \$600 million Canadian (US466 million) in equipment and weapons.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 Pacific rim economies hit by inflation, war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/inflation-russia-ukraine-covid-health-asia-b6bb5cc8756185206b14b73e5ab3bd87">https://apnews.com/article/inflation-russia-ukraine-covid-health-asia-b6bb5cc8756185206b14b73e5ab3bd87</a>
GIST	<p>BANGKOK (AP) — Economies in the Asia-Pacific are forecast to hit the doldrums this year as decades-high inflation and the war in Ukraine compound geopolitical uncertainties and the aftereffects of the pandemic.</p> <p>A <a href="#">report on Pacific Rim economies</a> by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum said Friday that growth in the region will likely fall by more than half this year to 2.5% from 5.9% last year, when many countries were recovering from the worst of their COVID-19 outbreaks.</p> <p>Weaker growth in the U.S. and China is a big factor behind the regional malaise, though other economies are also slowing. Russia's economy is expected to contract due to the implications of its war in Ukraine, and the three economies account for nearly 70% of the APEC region's GDP, the report said.</p> <p>The report forecast that regional growth would only pick up slightly in 2023, to 2.6%.</p> <p>Most economies in the region are just beginning to fully emerge from border closures and other pandemic-related precautions. Tourists have reappeared on the streets of Bangkok, but many businesses remain shuttered, casualties of the many months when travel was virtually paralyzed.</p> <p>In China, where authorities are still imposing lockdowns to wipe out COVID-19 outbreaks, the economy <a href="#">contracted 2.6%</a> in the three months ending in June compared with the previous quarter after Shanghai and other cities were shut down to fight coronavirus outbreaks.</p> <p>The <a href="#">U.S. economy contracted</a> by 0.9% in April-June, while Russia's economy shrank 0.5% in January-June compared with a year before, according to its Ministry of Economic Development.</p> <p><a href="#">Japan's economy shrank at a 0.5% annual rate</a> in January-March and is forecast to expand only 2% in the fiscal year ending in March 2023.</p> <p>Some economies are doing better.</p> <p>Indonesia reported Friday that its economy grew at a better-than-expected 5.4% annual rate in the April-June quarter as it bounced back from a wave of omicron variant coronavirus infections.</p>

	<p>An exporter of raw materials such as coal and palm oil, the country saw its exports jump nearly 20% in the last quarter as prices for many materials soared. But that windfall is likely to dissipate as price increases ease or reverse, analysts said.</p> <p>“We expect slowing growth in the rest of the world to take its toll ... as commodity prices continue to recede. On the domestic front, headwinds from high inflation, which reached a seven-year high and is set to rise further in the coming months, are growing,” Alex Holmes of Oxford Economics said in a commentary.</p> <p>India is also growing faster than much of the rest of the region.</p> <p>Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das projected that growth would remain robust, at 7.2% in the financial year ending in March 2023. But to counter inflation that hit 6.7% in June, the <a href="#">central bank raised its key interest rate</a> on Friday by a half percentage point to 5.4%.</p> <p>More than half of the 21 APEC members have raised rates or otherwise tightened monetary policy to counter inflation, which now averages 5.4% for the region, the APEC report said.</p> <p>It pointed to a 23% overall increase in the food price index of the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization, noting that inflation is likely to remain elevated for at least the rest of the year as central banks adjust their policies to try to bring it under control.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 China suspends range of ties w/US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-asia-beijing-b252479810add6a225fa1e4a6d441983">https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-asia-beijing-b252479810add6a225fa1e4a6d441983</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — China on Friday said it is canceling or suspending dialogue with the United States on a range of issues from climate change to military relations and anti-drug efforts in retaliation for a visit this week to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.</p> <p>The measures, which come amid cratering relations between Beijing and Washington, are the latest in a promised series of steps intended to punish the U.S. for allowing the visit to the island it claims as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. China on Thursday launched threatening military exercises in six zones just off Taiwan’s coasts that it says will run through Sunday.</p> <p>Missiles have also been fired over Taiwan, defense officials told state media. China opposes the self-governing island having its own contacts with foreign governments, but its response to the Pelosi visit has been unusually vociferous.</p> <p>The Foreign Ministry said dialogue between U.S. and Chinese regional commanders and defense department heads would be canceled, along with talks on military maritime safety.</p> <p>Cooperation on returning illegal immigrants, criminal investigations, transnational crime, illegal drugs and climate change will be suspended, the ministry said.</p> <p>China said Friday that more than 100 warplanes and 10 warships have taken part in the live-fire military drills surrounding Taiwan over the past two days, while announcing mainly symbolic sanctions against U.S. House Speaker <a href="#">Nancy Pelosi and her family over her visit</a> to Taiwan earlier this week.</p> <p>The official Xinhua News Agency said Friday that fighters, bombers, destroyers and frigates were all used in what it called “joint blockage operations.”</p> <p>The military’s Eastern Theater Command also fired new versions of missiles it said hit unidentified targets in the Taiwan Strait “with precision.”</p>

The Rocket Force also fired projectiles over Taiwan into the Pacific, military officers told state media, in a major ratcheting up of China's threats to attack and invade the island.

The drills, which Xinhua described as being held on an "unprecedented scale," are China's most strident response to Pelosi's [visit](#). The speaker is the highest-ranking U.S. politician to visit Taiwan in 25 years.

Dialogue and exchanges between China and the U.S., particularly on military matters and economic exchanges, have generally been halting at best. Climate change and fighting trade in illegal drugs such as fentanyl were, however, areas where they had found common cause, and Beijing's suspension of cooperation could have significant implications for efforts to achieve progress in dealing with those issues.

On the Chinese coast across from Taiwan, tourists gathered Friday to try to catch a glimpse of any military aircraft heading toward the exercise area.

Fighter jets could be heard flying overhead and tourists taking photos chanted, "Let's take Taiwan back," looking out into the blue waters of the Taiwan Strait from Pingtan island, a popular scenic spot in Fujian province.

Pelosi's visit stirred emotions among the Chinese public, and the government's response "makes us feel our motherland is very powerful and gives us confidence that the return of Taiwan is the irresistible trend," said Wang Lu, a tourist from neighboring Zhejiang province.

China is a "powerful country and it will not allow anyone to offend its own territory," said Liu Bolin, a high school student visiting the island.

His mother, Zheng Zhidan, was somewhat more circumspect.

"We are compatriots and we hope to live in peace," Zheng said. "We should live peacefully with each other."

China's insistence that Taiwan is its territory and its threat to use force to bring it under its control have featured highly in ruling Communist Party propaganda, the education system and the entirely state-controlled media for more than seven decades since the sides were divided amid civil war in 1949.

Taiwan residents overwhelmingly favor maintaining the status quo of de facto independence and reject China's demands that the island unify with the mainland under Communist control.

On Friday morning, China sent military ships and war planes across the mid-line of the Taiwan Strait, the Taiwanese Defense Ministry said, crossing what had for decades been an unofficial buffer zone between China and Taiwan.

Five of the missiles fired by China since the military exercises began Thursday landed in Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone off Hateruma, an island far south of Japan's main islands, Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said. He said Japan protested the missile landings to China as "serious threats to Japan's national security and the safety of the Japanese people."

Japan's Defense Ministry later said they believe four other missiles fired from China's southeastern coast of Fujian flew over Taiwan.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Friday that China's military exercises aimed at Taiwan represent a "grave problem" that threatens regional peace and security.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said China's actions were in line with "international law and international practices," though she provided no evidence.

“As for the Exclusive Economic Zone, China and Japan have not carried out maritime delimitation in relevant waters, so there is no such thing as an EEZ of Japan,” Hua told reporters at a daily briefing.

In Tokyo, where Pelosi is winding up her Asia trip, she said China cannot stop U.S. officials from visiting Taiwan. Kishida, speaking after breakfast with Pelosi and her congressional delegation, said the missile launches need to be “stopped immediately.”

China said it summoned European diplomats in the country to protest statements issued by the Group of Seven industrialized nations and the European Union criticizing the Chinese military exercises surrounding Taiwan.

Its Foreign Ministry on Friday said Vice Minister Deng Li made “solemn representations” over what he called “wanton interference in China’s internal affairs.”

Deng said China would “prevent the country from splitting with the strongest determination, using all means and at any cost.”

The ministry said the meeting was held Thursday night but gave no information on which countries participated. Earlier Thursday, China canceled a foreign ministers’ meeting with Japan to protest the G-7 statement that there was no justification for the exercises.

Both ministers were attending a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Cambodia.

China has promoted the overseas support it has received for its response to Pelosi’s visit, mainly from fellow authoritarian states such as Russia, Syria and North Korea.

China had earlier summoned U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns to protest Pelosi’s visit. The speaker left Taiwan on Wednesday after meeting with President Tsai Ing-wen and holding other public events. She traveled on to South Korea and then Japan. Both countries host U.S. military bases and could be drawn into a conflict involving Taiwan.

The Chinese exercises involve troops from the navy, air force, rocket force, strategic support force and logistic support force, according to Xinhua.

They are believed to be the largest held near Taiwan in geographical terms and the closest in proximity — within 20 kilometers (12 miles) of the island.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday called the drills a “significant escalation” and said he has urged Beijing to back down.

U.S. law requires the government to treat threats to Taiwan, including blockades, as matters of “grave concern.”

The drills are an echo of the last major Chinese military drills aimed at intimidating Taiwan’s leaders and voters in 1995 and 1996.

Taiwan has put its military on alert and staged civil defense drills, but the overall mood remained calm on Friday. Flights have been canceled or diverted and fishermen have remained in port to avoid the Chinese drills.

In the northern port of Keelung, Lu Chuan-hsiung, 63, was enjoying his morning swim Thursday, saying he wasn’t worried.

“Everyone should want money, not bullets,” Lu said.



HEADLINE	<b>08/04 FDA: divide pox dose to increase supply</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3588440-fda-considering-dividing-jynneos-doses-into-fifths-to-increase-vaccine-supply/">https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3588440-fda-considering-dividing-jynneos-doses-into-fifths-to-increase-vaccine-supply/</a>
GIST	<p>The <a href="#">Biden</a> administration is considering splitting doses of the smallpox vaccine, which are being used to prevent monkeypox amid the current outbreak, into five smaller doses, the head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said Thursday.</p> <p>FDA Commissioner <a href="#">Robert Califf</a> said during a briefing that his agency was looking into possible solutions to increase the number of available doses of the Jynneos vaccine. One of these proposed solutions is dividing the current doses into fifths.</p> <p>“We’re considering an approach for the current doses of Jynneos that would allow health care providers to use an existing one dose vial of the vaccine to administer a total of up to five separate doses,” Califf said. “This approach which we’re referring to as dose-sparing, would change the method of administration for Jynneos which currently administered subcutaneously.”</p> <p>According to Califf, this proposed change would involve injecting the reduced Jynneos doses in between layers of skin, creating a “pocket” for the vaccine.</p> <p>“There’s some advantages to intradermal administration, including an improved immune response to the vaccine,” Califf said. “It’s important to note that overall safety and efficacy profile will not be sacrificed with this approach.”</p> <p>An FDA spokesperson told The Hill this change in the monkeypox vaccination strategy was being considered because it had become “clear to all of us that we would not meet current demand with the current supply.”</p> <p>“As we often do at FDA, we began exploring other scientifically feasible options. The identification of a clinical study that demonstrates that this approach could work has been particularly useful in informing how this might work without sacrificing the safety and efficacy of the vaccine,” said the spokesperson.</p> <p>If pursued, this new strategy would still involve two doses administered about 28 days apart.</p> <p>James Krellenstein, co-founder of the LGBTQ+ healthcare advocacy group PrEP4All, noted on <a href="#">Twitter</a> that the FDA’s decision appeared to be based on a 2015 study that looked into the immune response derived from a one-fifth dose of Jynneos administered intradermally compared to a full dose administered subcutaneously, which is when the shot is injected into the layer of fat beneath the skin.</p> <p>The study, funded in part by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, found that an “equivalent immune response” between the two different forms of Jynneos administration.</p> <p>Krellenstein wrote he was glad to see this decision being considered, saying his organization had suggested this strategy to federal officials multiple times.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Eastern WA: 3 major wildfires burning</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3585162/three-wildfires-across-eastern-washington-burn-22000-acres/">https://mynorthwest.com/3585162/three-wildfires-across-eastern-washington-burn-22000-acres/</a>
GIST	<p>As of Thursday morning, three major wildfires burn around Eastern Washington: the Vantage Wildfire in Kittitas County, the Cow Canyon Fire in Yakima Valley, and the Williams Lake fire near Cheney, Wash.</p> <p>The total area the fires are burning is just shy of 22,000 acres. The Vantage fire is burning the largest at 17,000 acres, the Williams Lake fire at 3,200 acres, and the Cow Canyon at 1,500 acres.</p> <p>There are also two smaller, emerging fires: the Diamond Watch Fire, and the Lower Goose Fire.</p>

Firefighters have been brought from across the state to fight the Vantage fire, which has more than tripled in size since it was first reported Monday, August 1.

The main reason for the fire's quick spread, according to the South East Washington Interagency All-Hazards team, is the dry condition over the past few weeks, which they are hoping will end Thursday with cooler weather and higher humidity.

Vantage Highway remains closed as six crews, 31 engines, and air support work to contain the fire, which is estimated to currently be 25% contained.

A cabin and three outbuildings have been lost to this fire, and all evacuation orders are now lifted.

At the Williams Lake fire, the evacuation alert is currently at Level 3, warning some nearby residents on the lake to evacuate the area immediately

This fire, with smoke visible from Spokane, was first reported about 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 3, and is currently 0% contained.

The American Red Cross Association has opened a shelter at Cheney High School to shelter and provide emergency services to residents who might need them.

The Cow Canyon fire, northwest of Selah, is currently at 1,500 acres and 0% contained.

Level 2 or "Be ready to go" evacuations, were given to about 50 homes or structures.

No major injuries of residents or firefighters have been reported.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Armed police patrols return to UW dorms</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3583818/armed-police-return-patrols-uw-dorms-after-dispute-union/">https://mynorthwest.com/3583818/armed-police-return-patrols-uw-dorms-after-dispute-union/</a>
GIST	<p>After ending armed police patrols of student housing in the wake of the George Floyd protests, the University of Washington has reversed its decision and will bring back armed police patrols of UW dorms.</p> <p>The Public Employee Relations Commission (PERC) found that UW failed to bargain with Teamsters Union Local 117, which represents the University of Washington Police Department, over the end of patrol shifts around the dorms. The report found that the university failed to inform UWPD about removing armed officers from the residence halls before introducing unarmed Campus Security Responders (CSRs).</p> <p>The original 2021 decision to reassign armed patrol units with unarmed civilian CSRs stems from several demonstrations done by students and an open letter to divest from UWPD from the Student Government and the Black Student Union.</p> <p>"The employer's decision to create the CSR position and, eventually, assign CSRs to patrol residence halls at night in lieu of armed Campus Police Officers was made by the employer in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and in response to demands by the Black Student Union on campus," the report reads. "One of the demands was to "Disarm and Divest from UWPD." In a letter addressing those demands, UW President Ana Mari Cauce recognized the police violence that Black students and community members have witnessed and "the painful history of systemic racism that has been with us since the founding of our country."</p> <p>In an investigation done by PERC, they determined that the university did not properly meet with the representatives from Local 117 to bargain over the shift change, violating Washington State Labor Laws. The university argues that the expiration in June 2021 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)</p>



between UWPD and UW Housing and Food Service, which established the patrols of the dorms, allowed them to change their security strategy for student housing.

The report concludes that the interest of the unionized officers to maintain their patrol shifts outweighs the university's priority in rehabilitating its image in relation to public safety officers on campus.

"The employees' interest in maintaining bargaining unit work outweighs the employer's interest in a speedy reimagining of public safety on the employer's campus ... Instead, the employer determined that it needed to respond to campus interests and ignored its bargaining obligation."

The decision was not unanimous though, with Commissioner Mark Busto noting that UWPD and the union failed to provide any proof that reassigning dorm patrols away from armed officers and assigning civilian safety officers had any financial impact on union members.

He also argues that since the university had an interest in removing armed patrols as a part of the university's entrepreneurial control. Specifically due to the possible repercussions among students and faculty, and the university's interest in limiting student interactions with armed security when they might not be trained for handling interactions with students.

"The employer neither removed CPOs from bid positions nor laid off CPOs. The union did not present evidence that the CPOs suffered any financial impact from the transfer, such as the loss of overtime," Busto wrote in his dissenting opinion. "With respect to their job duties, the CPOs continued to respond to nearly all the calls for service on campus and dispatches to the dormitories. In short, CPOs retained their law enforcement responsibilities and activities and ceded only their patrol and outreach function in the residence halls to the CSRs, who were authorized only to 'observe and report.'"

The commission has ordered UW to restore the patrols for officers of UWPD and pay any lost wages to officers that might have lost income due to the change.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 Russia turns to Turkey to blunt sanctions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/05/russia-turkey-war-sanctions-trade/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/05/russia-turkey-war-sanctions-trade/</a>
GIST	<p>Russia is turning to Turkey and other potential new trading partners as it tries to circumvent Western sanctions that are starting to bite even deeper into its economy following its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to meet his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in Sochi on Friday, and the meeting — the <a href="#">leaders' second</a> in just over two weeks — is setting off alarms that the Kremlin could strengthen economic ties with a NATO nation that has not joined in imposing <a href="#">sanctions on Moscow</a>.</p> <p>A Russian proposal intercepted ahead of the meeting indicates Russia hopes Turkey will agree to new channels to help it avoid those restrictions on its banking, energy and industrial sectors.</p> <p>The proposal, which this week was shared with The Washington Post by Ukrainian intelligence, calls for Erdogan's government to permit Russia to buy stakes in Turkish oil refineries, oil terminals and reservoirs — a move that economists say could help disguise the origin of its exports after the European Union's <a href="#">oil embargo</a> kicks in fully next year. Russia also is requesting that several state-owned Turkish banks allow correspondent accounts for Russia's biggest banks, which economists and sanctions experts say would be a flagrant breach of Western sanctions, and that Russian industrial producers be allowed to operate out of free economic zones in Turkey.</p> <p>There is no indication that Turkey would support these arrangements since they would leave the country's own banks and companies at risk of secondary sanctions and cut off their access to Western markets. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not respond to requests for comment. The Kremlin previously described the Putin-Erdogan meeting as focused on military-technical cooperation.</p>

A senior Turkish official, in response to questions about the Russian proposal, did not address its details but said the country remains “committed to Ukraine’s independence and sovereignty.” He added that Turkey “as a matter of principle...exclusively joins sanctions that are imposed by the United Nations.”

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive diplomatic meeting, noted that Turkey is “the only NATO ally that both Ukraine and Russia speak with and trust. That is why no other country has been able to bring together the two foreign ministers or official delegations.”

Western government officials, also speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation, told The Post that they were not aware of the intercepted proposal but knew Russia is seeking ways to circumvent the war-related sanctions and their growing economic damage. Russian officials are traveling the world trying to find people who would be willing to do business with their financial institutions, they said, noting that Turkey is among a group of jurisdictions being approached because of their lax regard to enforcement.

With Russia cut off from much of the global economy, such overtures are a sign of the regime’s increasing worries, those Western officials and economists say. Putin has derided Western sanctions as a failure — a steady stream of revenue from [energy sales have propped up](#) the Russian ruble and the country’s financial system — and the International Monetary Fund now forecasts Russia’s economy to fall only 6 percent this year.

But economists say headline numbers mask a collapse across a large swath of Russian manufacturing and call the banking sector a “zombie system,” with withdrawal of hard-currency deposits banned. Though Russia has sought to divert trade flows through countries like India and China, the Western-imposed block on imports of high-tech components has brought some industries to a standstill.

“The situation will be darker next year,” said Sergei Guriev, professor at France’s Sciences Po and former chief economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. “No one knows how things are going to function when the European oil embargo kicks in. We’re in uncharted territory.”

New figures released last week by Russia’s state statistics agency Rosstat show how hard some sectors have been hit. Car production, the industry most dependent on foreign components, was down 89 percent in June year on year, while production of computers and semiconductors was down 40 percent year on year and that of washing machines nearly 59 percent lower.

“It’s clear things are going to get tougher and tougher,” said Maxim Mironov, professor of finance at the IE Business School in Madrid. The announcement this week that one of the main auto plants of state-owned AvtoVAZ would reduce its workforce signals a lack of other options for the company — and the government, he noted. “Cutbacks are beginning and it could lead to social tension.”

Other high-tech sectors such as pharmaceutical production are also floundering. A Central Bank of Russia survey last month found that 40 percent of pharmaceutical producers had failed to find replacements for imports of ingredients and equipment. “Russia has been trying to onshore pharmaceutical production, but it clearly hasn’t been successful,” said Elina Ribakova, deputy chief economist at the Washington-based Institute of International Finance. “Sometimes the overall data doesn’t cover all the nuance,” she said, with aluminum producers facing choke points on vital chemical supplies.

Sergei Aleksashenko, a former deputy Central Bank chairman now in exile in the United States, said it’s imperative for Russia to find alternative financial channels for its banks. “It is a question of money,” he said, pointing out that Iran, with help from Russia and Turkey, had previously managed to get around Western sanctions. “If you pay a lot, there will be some banks ready to take the risk.”

The Putin regime had previously hoped to bypass the current sanctions by creating alternative payment systems through Chinese banks, according to a well-connected Russian state official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of fear of retribution. Yet Chinese banks have balked at taking on that role

because of the risk of secondary sanctions. And despite the country's increasing imports of Russian oil and gas, it cannot replace all of Russia's equipment needs.

A study by the Green Finance & Development Center at Shanghai's Fudan University concluded that sanctions fears prompted China to abandon new investments in Russia this year as part of its Belt and Road initiative. The Western officials said it had become clear that China was not an adequate channel for Russia to mitigate the impact of sanctions, forcing the Kremlin to desperately look for other partners.

In Erdogan's [complicated relationship](#) with Putin — marked by periods of conflict and cooperation — Russia had significant past leverage and showed its displeasure by cutting off the flow of tourists to Turkey or banning the import of Turkish agricultural products. Since the start of the Ukrainian war, Turkey has positioned itself as a mediator between Moscow and Kyiv — a role that appeared to pay dividends last month when [Turkey and the United Nations brokered an agreement](#) to resume grain shipments from blockaded Ukrainian ports.

Erdogan wants Putin's acquiescence for a planned Turkish military operation against Kurdish forces in northern Syria. Russia maintains troops in the area as part of its support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

According to two Moscow businessmen, retail supply chains are already being rebuilt in Russia with Turkey's help. The owner of a major retail chain said his outlets had completely reorganized supplies through new hubs in Turkey, Israel, China and Azerbaijan. Recent trade data from Turkish Statistical Institute, Ankara's statistics office also known as Turkstat, shows monthly Turkish exports to Russia surged by about \$400 million between February and June.

But consumer goods aside, sanctions experts and Western officials doubt Turkey could become a hub for vitally needed equipment supplies without facing the risk of crippling secondary sanctions. Those officials said the country now has to make a choice, knowing that any business it does with Russia risks casting a pall over its economy and financial sector and will make it harder to do business with the rest of the world.

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HEADLINE	08/05 Ukraine killing tanks w/US Javelins
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/05/ukraine-war-javelins-russia-tanks/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/05/ukraine-war-javelins-russia-tanks/</a>
GIST	<p>NEAR IZYUM, Ukraine — It turns out, some Ukrainian soldiers discovered, that Javelin cases make great beds. The U.S.-made antitank missiles are packed in large, black rectangular capsules — perfect for elevating a slim cot off the dirty, cold floors of front-line positions.</p> <p>“Make sure you mention they’re empty,” said a soldier, showing off the makeshift beds. “The last thing we need is Americans thinking they’re sending us Javelins just so we can sleep on them.”</p> <p>It’s the opposite, actually: The 93rd Mechanized Brigade had fired so many Javelins at Russian tanks that they needed something to do with the pile of empty cases.</p> <p>The fighting in this stage of war between Russia and Ukraine has shifted toward an exchange of long-range artillery and missile strikes. But despite Javelins being a shorter-range weapon — its maximum range is about 2.5 miles — soldiers here near Russian-occupied Izyum in northeastern Ukraine still consider Javelins an effective way to inflict punishing damage on Russian troops. Lt. Oleksandr Sosovskyy referred to the weapons as his “good buddies.”</p> <p>He said the Ukrainian and Russian troops in many places are dug in on front lines just a few miles apart — within Javelin range.</p> <p>“We keep burning their vehicles, and that means that a few more houses in Ukraine will stay intact,” he said. “Children won’t get killed. Civilians and military won’t get killed.”</p>

For years, as Ukraine was locked in a simmering conflict with Russian-led separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, Javelin antitank missiles were the premier military aid from Washington — a defensive, lethal weapon intended to deter greater hostilities. Then, they were kept away from the front line and never used outside of training environments, but already “Javelin” had become part of the lexicon in Ukraine as a symbol of Western support.

After Russian tanks actually crossed the border on Feb. 24 — and some were immediately wiped out with Javelins — the cult around the weapons grew. “Javelin” — or “Javelina” for a girl — is now a common name for pets. Local department stores sell plush Javelin missile toys for children. An internet meme of religious figures cradling Javelins became so popular that its creator started [a charity organization](#) selling T-shirts with the images. Ukraine’s defense minister recently wore a “Saint Javelin” patch on his bulletproof vest.

Lt. Col. Bohdan Dmytruk is another fan of the anti-armor system. A battalion commander in Ukraine’s 93rd brigade, Dmytruk said he’s seen a decline in the quality of tanks Russians are using on the front lines. He has an intimate understanding of his enemy — his battalion was fighting the same Russian brigade in the Sumy region, farther north, earlier in the war, and they are now facing off again in the Kharkiv region.

In Sumy, the 93rd brigade was victorious, expelling Russian forces from the region. In the more than three months that they’ve been posted near Izyum, the front line hasn’t budged much, though Dmytruk said his unit advanced about 5 miles along one part of it during that time. The road to Ukraine’s current trench positions is littered with destroyed Russian vehicles and rotting soldiers’ corpses. The grain fields here have been burned and filled with craters from artillery shells — sunflowers tend to sprout around their edges.

The tanks the Russians are using now are older, Dmytruk said, because Javelins and similar weapons have depleted their arsenal. Even the crews operating the tanks now are less experienced, often not even managing to fire on Dmytruk’s forces before they’re taken out, he said, because they didn’t properly load the ammunition.

“The Ukrainian military basically destroyed their newest tanks and infantry combat vehicles in the first wave of fighting,” Dmytruk said. “The last vehicle of theirs we damaged just a couple days ago was a BMP-1, which is one of their oldest models. They would’ve had that one sitting in storage for a long time, so they’re really emptying out their stocks right now.”

Washington has provided Ukraine with more than 5,000 Javelins as part of its more than \$8 billion in material aid since the start of the Biden administration. In the first days of the war, Javelins were passed around to anyone who spotted an enemy column — sometimes with on-the-spot instruction.

Before the Russian invasion, some Ukrainian servicemembers had attended special sessions with U.S. trainers on how to use the Javelin. But it was nowhere near enough to defend against Russian tank convoys once the war started.

Sosovskyy said he watched a 5-minute YouTube video and scanned a 12-point instruction manual — all while being driven to the spot from where he had to start firing the weapons. The first time, it didn’t work.

“You shoot, but something’s not working and then you are trying to learn on your own, with the enemy right there,” he said. “When we figured it out and managed to hit targets, not only would the target get destroyed, but the rest of the convoy would get scared and flee. Javelins helped us quickly get rid of them.”

“You’re like in a cartoon,” Sosovskyy added. “Click-click and it flies.”

	<p>Using Javelins and other antitank missiles, such as British NLAW and the Ukrainian-made Stugna-P, now requires more of a hunt. The 93rd brigade uses drones to look for targets. Then small teams — usually about two people — move into firing range to take it out with Javelins or NLAWs, which are considered lighter and easier to use but reserved for shorter distances.</p> <p>Members of the 93rd brigade have also come up with creative ways to reach the Russians. Dmytruk said his soldiers will sometimes attach a “present” — an antitank grenade — to a drone that will then drop it on any enemy vehicle.</p> <p>“Right now, they’re afraid to even walk up to their tanks,” Dmytruk said. He said he’s intercepted audio of some Russian commanders telling their soldiers to fill white bags with dirt and cover the tops of their tanks. Dmytruk said doing that is “useless.”</p> <p>And it’s not just empty Javelin cases his brigade recycles. If a Russian tank or combat vehicle is lightly damaged and recoverable, the Ukrainians will snag it for themselves. Dmytruk said his battalion alone has destroyed 18 Russian tanks, but five were taken as “trophies” that Ukrainian soldiers repaired, repainted and redeployed to the front.</p> <p>Among them are two T-80 models parked in thick mud and under the cover of tree branches. They weren’t hit with Javelins — then they wouldn’t have been salvageable. But with many of their tanks captured, the Russians are turning to older tanks, and the Ukrainians are fighting them with their own newer ones.</p> <p>“We can see it by their equipment that they are lacking some,” Sosovskyy said. “We learn that from intercepted messages or some stories. We see they are panicking, that their reconnaissance is getting weaker. So we are hopeful. And we’ll be doing everything we can to kick them out of here.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/04 NOAA still predicts busy season in Atlantic</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/04/noaa-hurricane-outlook-update-atlantic/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/04/noaa-hurricane-outlook-update-atlantic/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>When it comes to the tropics, the Atlantic usually starts heating up quickly as the calendar flips to August. This year, however, there’s nothing on the immediate horizon. There are no strong disturbances and no reliably modeled storms or hurricanes as a stubborn lid of Saharan dust helps keep tropical activity at bay over much of the Atlantic.</p> <p>Despite the meager prospects in the short term, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Thursday that it is still expecting an above-average season, with three to five major hurricanes likely and a dozen or more named storms probable.</p> <p>NOAA’s confidence levels have hardly changed, either, since its previous assessment in late May, during which the agency called for a 65 percent chance of an above-average season. Now it is saying there is a 60 percent likelihood that the season winds up above-average.</p> <p>All told, NOAA’s expectation is for 14 to 20 named storms reaching tropical storm strength or better, compared with an average of 14 in a season. Of those storms, the agency thinks six to 10 will become hurricanes, and three to five will reach Category 3 strength or better with winds surpassing 110 mph.</p> <p>Those odds are not indicative of whether a storm will make landfall, never mind on U.S. soil. There have been active or even hyperactive Atlantic seasons with minimal U.S. impact, as well as comparatively quiet seasons that brought calamitous effects stateside. At a broad glance, the 1992 Atlantic hurricane season, during which seven named storm formed, looks like a dud — until closer inspection reveals that the first storm was Category 5 Hurricane Andrew, which razed much of South Florida at the end of August.</p> <p><b>What shaped the forecast</b></p>



NOAA cited an ongoing La Niña as a principal driver in its prognosis, since this atmosphere-ocean pattern tends to weaken high-altitude winds over the tropical Atlantic. The slackening of those winds, which are ordinarily hostile to tropical development, makes it easier for fledgling tropical waves to grow tall and organize. La Niña is the opposite of El Niño, both of which first begin as anomalies in water temperatures measured across the eastern tropical Pacific.

In early July, the National Weather Service stated that there was a 62 percent chance that La Niña would continue during August, September and October — peak hurricane season. The odds of an El Niño cropping up are a negligible 2 or 3 percent.

NOAA’s continued aggressive predictions for hurricane season in 2022 are echoed by the sentiments of other prominent forecasters, including Philip Klotzbach, a hurricane researcher at Colorado State University with a strong track record. In the short term, meaning the next two weeks, his team is expecting near-normal activity. But it hinted that things could get busier after that.

“There are indications that a [tropical cyclone] could potentially form in the central tropical Atlantic in about 10 to 14 days,” read his biweekly report. “There is also potential for [tropical cyclone] development off of the US East Coast in week two.”

Over the next two weeks, weather models are highlighting above-average wind shear, or a change of wind speed and/or direction with height, over the tropics. Wind shear is highly disruptive to tropical systems, pulling them apart in a tug-of-war fashion or knocking mature hurricanes off-kilter. That should change by mid-August.

“We do anticipate that there could be a reduction in vertical wind shear near the end of the two-week forecast period,” he [wrote](#).

Thereafter, his team is still anticipating a busy season, and experts across the board have noted that the seemingly slow start is more on par with what is typical.

“It’s not as weird as it feels,” wrote Bryan Norcross, meteorologist for Fox Weather and former hurricane specialist at the Weather Channel, in a recent Facebook [post](#). “On average, the third tropical storm is not named until August 3, so we’re still slightly ahead of the game for the moment.”

The season thus far has featured three storms — Alex, Bonnie and Colin — but has been silent since Independence Day. Bonnie formed at the start of July and became a rare “crossover” storm, transiting Central America and reaching hurricane status in the Pacific.

The peak of hurricane season in the Atlantic is usually anchored around mid-September, lagging a few months behind the summer solstice since it takes a while to heat up the ocean waters — the elixir of life for tropical systems. Because of that “thermal inertia,” or slow-to-change nature of sea surface temperatures, the oceans often remain warm well into the autumn, the reason the “official” end to hurricane season isn’t until Nov. 30.

Sea surface temperatures over large areas of the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico are several degrees above average, indicating that there will be plenty of energy to support some dangerous storms. And in an era in which hurricanes are demonstrably becoming wetter, more intense and more prone to bouts of rapid intensification because of human-induced climate change, the lull we’re experiencing may very well simply be the calm before the storm.

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HEADLINE	08/05 Pelosi: China will not isolate Taiwan
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/04/pelosi-taiwan-visit-china-missile-japan/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/04/pelosi-taiwan-visit-china-missile-japan/</a>



TOKYO — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi vowed on Friday that China would not succeed in isolating Taiwan, as Beijing imposed punitive sanctions on her over a visit to the island and continued [military exercises](#) that have sent fears of conflict in East Asia skyrocketing.

Pelosi's brief and unannounced trip to Taiwan this week brought to the fore the rising tensions between Washington and Beijing and the impact of the souring relations on U.S. allies that are economically dependent on China.

Beijing asserts sovereignty over Taiwan, a self-governing democracy of over 23 million people and has sought to exclude the island from global affairs by picking off its diplomatic partners and [reacting furiously](#) to exchanges between Taipei and foreign officials.

China "may try to keep Taiwan from visiting or participating in other places, but they will not isolate Taiwan," Pelosi said in Tokyo, her final stop on a multi-country tour, adding that Beijing could not dictate who could visit the island. "They are not doing our traveling schedule, the Chinese government is not doing that," she said.

China's Foreign Ministry announced on Friday that it had imposed unspecified sanctions on Pelosi and her immediate family in retaliation for what it called a "malicious and provocative" insistence on visiting Taiwan despite Beijing's strong opposition.

Since 2020, China has deployed mostly symbolic sanctions against former U.S. officials with increasing frequency, often as retribution for criticism over human rights abuses in Hong Kong and the Xinjiang region. Pelosi is one of the most senior sitting U.S. politicians to be singled out for personal censure by Beijing.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) says Taiwan issues are China's internal affairs, but Pelosi's visit underscored broad concern among the United States' Asian allies about conflict in the Taiwan Strait because of their proximity and the passageway's vital role in trade. Japan's concerns with potential Chinese military action against Taiwan — which is less than 100 miles from Japan's westernmost point — have shaped Tokyo's defense spending and diplomatic calculations.

On Thursday, as a part of the military exercises Beijing announced in response to Pelosi's trip to Taipei, five of China's ballistic missiles landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for the first time, with one falling as close as 50 miles from Yonaguni, Japan's westernmost inhabited island. On Friday, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida condemned those actions and called for China to halt the exercises.

"I have informed Speaker Pelosi that the fact China's ballistic missiles had landed near Japanese waters, including the EEZ, threatens our national safety and security," Kishida said. "We also confirmed continued close cooperation to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

In Taipei, the Defense Ministry said Chinese warships and military jets had crossed the median line on Friday, marking the third time this week that Beijing ignored the unofficial maritime border between Taiwan and China. The ministry said it had deployed aircraft, ships and its land-based missile system to monitor the situation.

"Whether it is launching ballistic missiles or deliberately crossing the middle line of the strait, the CCP's military exercises are highly provocative," the ministry said in a statement. "[We] will follow the principle of preparing for war rather than seeking war. The military and civilians will work together to defend our sovereignty and national security."

Taiwanese Premier Su Tseng-chang labeled China an "evil neighbor flexing its muscles on our doorstep" with actions that "arbitrarily sabotage" one of the world's busiest waterways, according to a statement from Taiwan's Executive Yuan, the executive branch of its government.

In a speech Thursday, President Tsai Ing-wen said Taiwan would remain responsible, rational and calm in the face of the “unprecedented threat.”

“I want to ask my fellow citizens to rest assured that our government is responding with a steady hand,” Tsai said, adding that airports and seaports continue to function normally and the economy remains stable. Some international flights were canceled, however.

China’s military maneuvers are expected to continue through the weekend. Taiwan has said the exercises, which affect six areas on all sides of Taiwan and come closer to the island than in previous cross-strait crises, are tantamount to a sea and air blockade.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a news conference in Cambodia on Friday that China’s firing of missiles around Taiwan was a significant escalation with no possible justification. The Biden administration has emphasized this week that Pelosi’s trip did not signal any change in longstanding U.S. policy, which acknowledges — without endorsing — Beijing’s claims over Taiwan. On Thursday, the United States summoned the Chinese ambassador for a rebuke over Beijing’s escalatory response.

Separately, China’s Foreign Ministry said Friday that Vice Foreign Minister Deng Li summoned Japan’s ambassador, along with European envoys from the Group of Seven countries, to complain about an “erroneous” statement from the G-7 and the European Union foreign minister criticizing China’s live-fire exercises and economic coercion against Taiwan as risking “unnecessary escalation.”

“What is evil? What is shameless? If there are still people in the world who don’t understand, please take a look at the statements of the G-7 and E.U. foreign minister,” China’s mission to the E.U. said in a statement Thursday.

China has also imposed economic pressure on Taiwan in retaliation for its hosting of Pelosi. Beijing banned imports this week from more than 100 Taiwanese fruit and seafood exporters, covering an export value of about \$20 million to \$26 million, according to Taiwan’s Council of Agriculture. Beijing also halted exports of natural sand to Taiwan.

Su, the premier, promised assistance for Taiwanese businesses hit by the trade sanctions but downplayed the disruption to Taiwan’s economy, saying that many local companies had already soured on the market after realizing how often “politics disrupts economic activity” in China.

As Pelosi was touring Taiwan on Wednesday, authorities in China’s Zhejiang province said they had detained a Taiwanese national, Yang Chi-yuan, on charges of endangering national security.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 New York ‘tip of iceberg’ with polio?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/nyregion/polio-wastewater-cases-nyc.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/nyregion/polio-wastewater-cases-nyc.html</a>
GIST	<p>New York State health officials on Thursday intensified their push for people who have not been immunized against <a href="#">polio</a> to get vaccinated “right away,” saying the one confirmed case of the disease found in the state may be “the tip of the iceberg” of a much wider threat.</p> <p>The urgent call came as officials said polio had been detected in wastewater samples taken in several locations and at different times in two counties north of New York City, potentially signaling community spread of the disease.</p> <p>“Based on earlier polio outbreaks, New Yorkers should know that for every one case of paralytic polio observed, there may be hundreds of other people infected,” Dr. Mary T. Bassett, the state’s health commissioner, said in a statement.</p> <p>“Coupled with the latest wastewater findings,” Dr. Bassett added, “the department is treating the single case of polio as just the tip of the iceberg of much greater potential spread.”</p>

Polio is caused by the poliovirus and children under 5 are most at risk of contracting it, but anyone who is unvaccinated is at risk. Polio is highly contagious, typically spreading from person to person when someone comes into contact with the feces of an infected person and then touches their mouth.

Many cases are asymptomatic, and some can cause flulike symptoms, but the disease, also known as poliomyelitis, can be disabling and even life-threatening. There is no cure.

Paralysis is a rare outcome, but before vaccines were widely available in the 1950s, polio outbreaks caused more than [15,000 cases of paralysis a year](#).

Last month, a case of polio — [the first to be reported in the United States in nearly a decade](#) — was identified in an unvaccinated adult man in Rockland County. No cases had originated in the United States since 1979.

State and county health officials said [the infection in Rockland County](#) had been transmitted from someone who received the oral polio vaccine, which has not been administered in the United States since 2000.

The virus circulating in New York may have originated outside the United States, where the oral vaccine is still administered, officials said. The oral vaccine contains weakened virus. It is safe, but if vaccine-derived virus circulates in a community, it can infect unvaccinated people and spread the disease.

In announcing the case, officials emphasized that the infected person was no longer contagious and said that their efforts would focus on increasing rates of vaccination and on determining whether anyone else might have been affected.

Officials have said that polio had been found in Rockland County wastewater samples taken in June, before the polio case was confirmed. On Thursday, they said evidence of the illness had also been found in wastewater samples taken in June and July from two “geographically different” parts of Orange County, which is adjacent to Rockland.

“The findings,” the state Health Department said in a news release, “provide further evidence of local — not international — transmission of a polio virus.”

There was no indication that the infected man in Rockland County was the source of the polio found in the wastewater samples, officials said. The investigation into the virus’s origin is continuing.

Because widespread vaccination has proved to be an effective prevention strategy, areas with low immunization rates can be at particular risk of an outbreak.

In both Rockland and Orange Counties, about [60 percent of 2-year-olds](#) have received all three doses of the polio vaccine, according to state data — a considerably lower rate than the 80 percent in the rest of the state excluding New York City. (To achieve herd immunity for polio, the [target vaccination rate](#) is 80 percent, according to the World Health Organization.)

Most adults in the United States need not get vaccinated against polio because they most likely were immunized as children, although some may be eligible for booster shots if they have an increased risk of exposure.

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HEADLINE	08/04 Russia intensifies assaults in Ukraine east
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/04/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#russia-intensifies-its-assault-on-ukrainian-fortifications-in-the-east-but-is-stretched-by-fighting-elsewhere">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/04/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#russia-intensifies-its-assault-on-ukrainian-fortifications-in-the-east-but-is-stretched-by-fighting-elsewhere</a>

DRUZHKIVKA, Ukraine — Longstanding strongpoints of Ukraine's defense in the east have come under intense attack in recent days, according to the Ukrainian Army and Western military analysts.

That Ukrainian soldiers still hold the trench mazes and fortifications in two suburban towns, Avdiivka and Pisky, on the edge of the city of Donetsk is a testament to the value of their dug-in positions in the east. Ukraine's strong defensive positions have slowed the Russian Army's advance to a crawl, with only two large cities, Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, and a few dozen miles of territory changing hands despite thousands of soldiers killed on both sides.

It was unclear exactly why assaults on the fortifications have been intensifying, and the assaults are an exception to a general tapering off of Russian attacks in the eastern Donbas region, which had been the focus of the war for months. Some military analysts believe that the relative lull has been partly a result of Russian forces' diverting to the south to fend off a Ukrainian counteroffensive there.

The two towns, mostly deserted and destroyed, are hardly big prizes to capture, but if they were to fall, that could ease Russian advances toward the three large cities in the Donetsk region remaining under Ukrainian control, Bakhmut, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.

The Ukrainian army and paramilitary groups built the fortifications in the two towns during the eight years of low-intensity war after Russia's 2014 military intervention in Ukraine to prop up a separatist region, the Donetsk People's Republic. They are now among Ukraine's easternmost positions.

Weaving through abandoned factories and mines, taking advantage of root cellars in country homes and using swamps as natural barriers, the defensive lines there have withstood countless assaults. After failing to flank Avdiivka, Russia began direct tank assaults this week, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based research organization.

The institute noted Russian propaganda videos suggesting that Russian troops had overrun a position at the ventilation shaft of the Butiyka coal mine, which since 2015 had been the closest Ukrainian position to the city of Donetsk, a few miles from what the separatists claim is their capital.

The Ukrainian general staff has said the tank assaults did not push its soldiers from Avdiivka, but noted that they were a partial success, in a possible acknowledgment of the loss of the strategically and politically important position.

"For days in a row now, the enemy has not let up on attempts to attack," the Ukrainian military governor of Avdiivka, Vitaliy Barabash, told Radio Liberty on Wednesday. "Everywhere is being hit by artillery and aviation" bombs.

The Russian military has also fired into the town with rockets that spray flammable material into the air and then ignite it, creating a giant fireball. The Russian thermobaric rocket system, nicknamed the Heatwave, is one of the most destructive weapons in Russia's arsenal.

"People are living in horrible, inhuman conditions," Mr. Barabash said. He said that about 2,000 civilians remained in Avdiivka out of a pre-invasion population of about 20,000. "Every day, the city is shelled about 20 times," he said.

Overall, Russia's campaign in Donbas has tapered off in recent weeks after the appearance on the battlefield of American HIMARS, the long-range rocket-launching system used to hit ammunition depots behind Russian lines, and the start of Ukraine's counteroffensive around the southern city of Kherson, according to Serhiy Grabskiy, a former Ukrainian army colonel and commentator on the war for the Ukrainian news media. Russia has diverted about 10,000 soldiers from the attack on Sloviansk to defend the south, he said.

"Ukrainian forces created in the Donbas quite effective defensive positions over the past several years," Mr. Grabskiy said in a telephone interview. The Russians "are frankly stuck in Donbas now without real

	success,” he said. “And they have a new headache: the south, which from the perspective of the Ukrainian armed forces is a more important strategic goal.”
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 More grain ships to leave Ukraine port</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/04/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#ukraine-grain-ships">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/04/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#ukraine-grain-ships</a>
GIST	<p>Three ships loaded with grain have been granted permission to leave Ukrainian ports on Friday, days after the first grain-laden vessel left the country since Russia’s invasion under a hard-won deal to free more than 20 million tons of Ukraine’s desperately needed stores.</p> <p>A joint coordination center in Istanbul, created by the agreement and staffed by officials from Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations, cleared the ships to depart, officials from the center said in a statement on Thursday. Two, the Polarnet and the Rojen, will leave from Ukraine’s Chornomorsk port, and the third, the Navi-Star, from Odesa, the statement said. They are carrying a total of 58,041 metric tons of corn bound for ports in Turkey, Ireland and Britain.</p> <p>The ships are expected to depart on Friday morning, weather permitting, the statement said. Under the deal, their first stop is in Turkish waters, for a joint-team inspection.</p> <p>The initial shipment under the deal left Ukraine’s Port of Odesa on Monday on the Razoni, which was led by a tugboat to avoid Ukrainian mines and passed through a Russian-controlled Black Sea corridor. It anchored in Turkish waters at the Bosphorus for inspection, and on Wednesday, was cleared to sail on to Tripoli, Lebanon.</p> <p>Many potential hazards lie ahead, but so far the safe passage of the Razoni offered hope that the long-negotiated deal will fulfill its aim of helping address — though not by itself resolving — global food shortages and high grain prices.</p> <p>A fourth ship, the Fulmar S, now anchored near Istanbul, was awaiting inspection to be cleared to travel to the Ukrainian port of Chornomorsk, officials from the joint center said on Thursday.</p> <p>Their statement said that the inbound Fulmar S would serve as “a second ‘proof of concept’” of the grain deal, and noted that the allowed travel corridor had been “revised to allow for more efficient passage of ships while maintaining safety.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Northeast record temperatures in heat wave</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/us/northeast-heat-wave-record-temperatures.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/us/northeast-heat-wave-record-temperatures.html</a>
GIST	<p>Several cities across the Northeast reported record-breaking temperatures on Thursday, as a heat wave <a href="#">that has covered much of the United States</a> this week peaked in the region.</p> <p>In Boston, the temperature climbed to 98 degrees Fahrenheit, surpassing a previous record of 96 set on Aug. 4 in 1928, the National Weather Service said. Anticipating high temperatures, the city’s mayor declared a <a href="#">heat emergency</a> from Thursday to Sunday and opened cooling centers throughout the city.</p> <p>Here are some of the other Northeast cities in which temperatures matched or surpassed previous records for Aug. 4, according to the Weather Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Albany, N.Y.</b>, reached 99 degrees, breaking its record of 98 set in 1955.</li> <li>• <b>Manchester, N.H.</b>, soared to 98 degrees, breaking its record of 94 set in 1935.</li> <li>• <b>Poughkeepsie, N.Y.</b>, hit 99 degrees, breaking its record of 98 set in 1944.</li> <li>• <b>Hartford, Conn.</b>, tied its record of 96 degrees, set in 1928 and previously reached in 1944.</li> <li>• <b>Concord, N.H.</b>, tied its record of 97 degrees, set in 1944.</li> <li>• <b>Westfield, Mass.</b>, tied its record of 94 degrees, set in 2012.</li> <li>• <b>Scranton, Pa.</b>, tied its record of 98 degrees, set in 1930.</li> </ul>

	<p>In New York City, the temperature reached 93 degrees in Central Park on Thursday, far short of the record of 100 degrees that was set in 1944, the Weather Service said.</p> <p>The high heat and humidity did trigger a heat advisory in the city, though, and <a href="#">a new study released on Thursday</a> from the comptroller's office found that some of the hottest neighborhoods didn't have enough public cooling centers.</p> <p>The region's heat wave was expected to <a href="#">ease somewhat</a> on Friday, with anticipated highs in the mid-90s.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Lebanon 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary port explosion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/04/the-pain-gets-worse-lebanese-mark-second-anniversary-of-beirut-port-explosion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/04/the-pain-gets-worse-lebanese-mark-second-anniversary-of-beirut-port-explosion</a>
GIST	<p>For two years, Beirut's crumbling grain silos had teetered over the ruins of the nearby port, a battered backdrop to a broken city that has barely stayed on its feet.</p> <p>Almost to the minute of the second anniversary of the <a href="#">Beirut port explosion</a> that destroyed them and pulverised nearby neighbours, a huge slither of the silos collapsed, showcasing yet again the dysfunction of Lebanon and the failed quest to bring those responsible to justice.</p> <p>Crowds lined adjoining overpasses on Thursday to commemorate the deaths of more than 200 people in one of the biggest industrial disasters in modern history. And in doing so, many were also mourning the ongoing destruction of a country, the demise of which is encapsulated in Lebanon's inability to hold its leaders to account either for the blast, or the wilful collapse of its economy.</p> <p>Hailed at the time as a galvanising moment that could finally break a corrupt protectorate that had enriched Lebanon's leaders at the expense of its citizens, the post-explosion era has instead served to reinforce the status quo. Beirut port was a microcosm of Lebanon's failings, a place where civil war-era leaders all had a stake in various arms of its operations, and took large financial cuts under informal understandings.</p> <p>While the ruin of the bulk cargo terminal, a global pandemic, and a plunging economy may have put pay to that, the patronage networks that have helped Lebanon to ruin remain intact. Attempts to investigate the cause of the blast and the negligence that led 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate to be stored haphazardly for seven years remain stalled, with little political will for any meaningful resumption.</p> <p>Among a crowd gathered near the port, Alan Hobeika, 17, held a picture of his friend Elias Khoury, who died in the blast in his home not far away. He said he joined the commemorative march because "justice is still not achieved until now. I'm here to honour him so he doesn't die in vain. We have to at least give him his rights so he can rest peacefully."</p> <p>"It's been two years and until now there's nothing we can call accountability or justice. I don't think it'll happen any time soon unless the international community steps in."</p> <p>"The pain [at Elias's death] grows more and more every single day. It gets worse and worse."</p> <p>Ongoing grief is a prevalent emotion among many survivors and family members. The lament extends to many other Lebanese who have since fled the country, angered first by the economic collapse that has resulted in an almost 25-fold fall in the local currency, and collectively traumatised by an event so catastrophic, yet seemingly so inconsequential.</p> <p>Ahead of the anniversary the UN secretary general, António Guterres, launched a plea for a "transparent, international investigation" into the blast. His call was poorly received by many Lebanese who cite the UN probe into the killing of the country's former prime minister Rafiq Hariri as an example of how a 13-year investigation diluted the impact of the "justice" it delivered.</p>



	<p>“No one can solve this except the Lebanese themselves, said Hassan Yamout, a Beirut resident. “And none of them will because they’re all involved in one way or another.”</p> <p>At 6.07pm, one minute before the ammonium nitrate detonated, after workers using welders had set fire to nearby sites, sirens started blaring and an ambulance made its way through the crowd as people clapped in support.</p> <p>Shortly afterwards, a helicopter carrying a water bucket flew over what remained of the grain silos, attempting to douse fires that had burned at their base for weeks.</p> <p>“The rest will fall over soon,” said Samer, 26, a student. “They should too. They’re only a symbol of failure.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 Day 163 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-163-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-163-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine has ceded some territory in the Donbas region to Russian forces, with Kyiv acknowledging Russia’s “partial success” in recent days.</b> The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has described the pressure his forces are under in the east of the country as “hell”. They have recaptured two villages near the city of Sloviansk, according to Ukrainian general Oleksiy Hromov, but have been forced to abandon a coal mine regarded as a key defensive position as forces are pushed to the outskirts of Avdiivka.</li> <li>• <b>Russia may launch an offensive in the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson</b> to try to wrest back momentum from Kyiv and has been visibly building up forces, Hromov said on Thursday. Much of the region is already occupied by Russia after it captured areas at the beginning of its invasion, but Ukrainian forces have been developing a counter-offensive to regain territory.</li> <li>• <b>Three more ships carrying grain have been authorised to leave Ukraine’s ports</b> on Friday as part of an international accord brokered to unblock grain exports and alleviate the global food crisis. The ships are bound for Turkey, Ireland and the UK. Millions of tonnes of grain have been stuck in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> since Russia invaded just over six months ago.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine will receive another financing package worth about \$8bn</b> from the European Union by September, a German government source told Reuters.</li> <li>• <b>Canada is sending up to 225 Canadian armed forces to the UK to recommence the training of Ukrainian military recruits</b>, the Canadian defence minister has announced. Since 2015, Canada has trained 33,000 Ukrainian military and security personnel but in February paused aspects of the training.</li> <li>• <b>Eight people have been killed and four wounded in Russian artillery shelling in the eastern Ukrainian town of Toretsk</b> in Donetsk oblast on Thursday, the regional governor has said. The shelling hit a public transport stop where people had gathered. Three children were among the wounded, said the area’s governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko.</li> <li>• <b>Nato members are working closely with defence companies to ensure <a href="#">Ukraine</a> gets more supplies of weapons and equipment</b> to be prepared for a drawn out war with Russia, the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said on Thursday. He told Reuters in an interview: “We are providing a lot of support but we need to do even more and be prepared for the long haul.”</li> <li>• <b>A US official accused Moscow of preparing to plant fake evidence</b> to make it look like the recent mass killing of Ukrainian prisoners in an attack on a Russian-controlled prison was caused by <a href="#">Ukraine</a>. Kyiv and Moscow have traded blame over the strikes on the prison in Kremlin-controlled Olenivka, in eastern Ukraine, last week.</li> <li>• <b>Amnesty International has said the Ukrainian army is endangering the life of civilians by basing themselves in residential areas.</b> The <a href="#">report</a> has been rejected by Ukrainian government representatives, who say it places blame on Ukraine for Russia’s invasion. The human rights group’s researchers found that Ukrainian forces were using some schools and hospitals as bases, firing near houses and sometimes living in residential flats. Ukraine’s deputy defence</li> </ul>

	minister, Hanna Maliar, accused Amnesty of “distorting the real picture” and of failing to understand the situation on the ground.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Ukraine forces fire on bridges, rail lines</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-fires-on-bridges-rail-lines-to-disrupt-russian-defense-of-kherson-11659616141?mod=hp_lead_pos11">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-fires-on-bridges-rail-lines-to-disrupt-russian-defense-of-kherson-11659616141?mod=hp_lead_pos11</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian forces struck a railway bridge in the southern Kherson region on Thursday, the Ukrainian military said, as it seeks to cut Moscow’s supply lines in preparation for a looming counteroffensive.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces have concentrated fire on <a href="#">crossings over the Dnipro River</a>, last month destroying a large road bridge 3½ miles to the east as well as striking the railway bridge.</p> <p>Damage to the two bridges—both called Antonivskiy—has forced Moscow to use military ferries to resupply its forces in the city of Kherson and other areas on the western side of the river.</p> <p>Kherson is the only Ukrainian regional capital that Moscow has captured in the five months since Russian President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a> ordered the invasion. The city and the surrounding terrain are Russia’s only foothold on the western bank of the Dnipro River, and present a route to the ports of Mykolaiv, Odessa and the rest of Ukraine’s remaining Black Sea shoreline. Retaking the region has become <a href="#">Ukraine’s critical priority</a> in the next phase of the war, rendering the destruction of Russian supply lines from the east of critical strategic importance.</p> <p>To protect the river crossings, Russian forces have “almost certainly” positioned radar reflectors in the water to thwart radar imaging and missile targeting, the U.K.’s Defense Ministry said.</p> <p>“This highlights the threat Russia feels from the increased range and precision of Western-supplied systems,” it said on Thursday.</p> <p>The threat of <a href="#">a Ukrainian counteroffensive</a> has compelled Russia to redeploy new units to Kherson rather than committing them to its campaign in the eastern Donbas region, which it vowed to capture after pulling back from around the capital in March.</p> <p>“What the Ukrainians seem to be doing is sucking more and more Russian combat power away [from the fight in Donbas],” said Jack Watling, a land warfare analyst at the Royal United Services Institute, a British think tank. “The Ukrainians don’t have the combat power to storm the city [of Kherson]; what they’re doing instead is eating away at the Russian combat positions.”</p> <p>In Donbas, parts of which have experienced fighting since Russia’s incursion in 2014, Russia’s Defense Ministry on Thursday said Ukrainian forces were abandoning their positions in the towns of Soledar, Bakhmut and Avdiivka. Russia is seeking to make further advances in the Donetsk region after capturing around two-thirds of the region’s territory. Russia last month claimed to have captured the entire Luhansk region, which together with the Donetsk region make up Donbas.</p> <p>The Russian claim came hours after the Ukrainian general staff said Ukrainian forces had repelled Russian advances in some of the same towns and at other points along the Donbas front.</p> <p>Local officials in the southern Mykolaiv region, which is held by the Ukrainians but borders the Kherson front, said it had come under fire early on Thursday. Two districts were hit, said Mayor Oleksandr Sienkevych. The head of the regional administration, Vitaliy Kim, said the shelling struck residential buildings, smashing windows and roofs.</p> <p>Ukraine’s security services said on Thursday they had detained a resident of the city who admitted to sharing coordinates of Ukrainian military positions with Russian forces, providing the enemy with information about the location of equipment and routes.</p>

Eight people were killed on Thursday when Russian shells landed near a bus stop in the town of Toretsk in the eastern Donetsk region, according to Pavlo Kyrylenko, the head of military administration.

“Another terror attack carried out by the uniformed thugs of the Russian terror state,” Andriy Yermak, Ukraine’s presidential spokesman, wrote on Twitter. “How many more people should suffer and die for the world to designate [the Russian Federation] a state sponsor of terrorism?”

Russia’s Defense Ministry didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

In the Russian-held city of Donetsk, Russian-installed officials said Thursday that Ukrainian forces had shelled the center of the city, killing six people and wounding seven. Videos shared by Russian state media showed a damaged hotel with blown-out windows.

Russian-installed officials said Ukraine had targeted a wake for Olga Kachura, a colonel with Russian-backed separatist forces in Donbas who was killed Wednesday in fighting in the Donetsk region. The wake was being held in a theater about 1,300 feet from the damaged Donbas Palace Hotel.

Col. Kachura had led separatist forces since 2014, when Moscow fomented a rebellion in the Donbas. Protracted fighting continued there before Mr. Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February. Earlier Thursday, Mr. Putin awarded Col. Kachura the posthumous title of “Hero of the Russian Federation,” according to a Kremlin statement.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, denied that Ukraine was behind the shelling in the Donetsk city center.

Also Thursday, human-rights group Amnesty International criticized Ukrainian forces for endangering civilians by launching attacks from populated areas, including setting up military bases at schools and hospitals, while condemning what it called indiscriminate attacks by Russian forces.

“We have documented a pattern of Ukrainian forces putting civilians at risk and violating the laws of war when they operate in populated areas,” Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s secretary-general, said. “Being in a defensive position does not exempt the Ukrainian military from respecting international humanitarian law.”

Ukraine’s forces early in the war pulled back to cities to avoid fighting a larger army in unprotected areas in Ukraine’s vast steppe and have avoided staying in barracks and bases because Russian forces have targeted them with cruise missiles.

Russia’s forces have repeatedly shelled apartment buildings in cities across Ukraine as they press their offensive into a sixth month. By the end of July, more than 5,000 Ukrainian civilians had been killed since Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, according to the United Nations.

Russian officials seized on the Amnesty report.

“We talk about this all the time, describing the actions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as tactics of using the civilian population as a ‘human shield,’” Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova wrote on Telegram.

Ukrainian leaders criticized the Amnesty report, “which unfortunately tries to amnesty the terrorist state and shift the responsibility from the aggressor to the victim,” Mr. Zelensky said in his nightly address Thursday.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said the Amnesty report created “a false balance between criminal and victim, between a country which is destroying thousands of civilians and whole cities, and a

country which is desperately defending itself, saving its population and the whole continent from this onslaught.”

In the U.S., White House spokesman John Kirby said that Russia is planning to falsify evidence and blame Ukraine for the July 29 attack on the Olenivka Prison, where more than 50 Ukrainian prisoners of war were killed.

Moscow and Kyiv accuse each other of targeting Ukrainian prisoners held in Russian-controlled territory.

“We anticipate that Russian officials will try to frame the Ukrainian Armed Forces in anticipation of journalists and potential investigators visiting the site of the attack,” Mr. Kirby said Thursday. He added, “In fact, we’ve already seen some spurious press reports to this effect where they have planted evidence.”

In Russia on Thursday, U.S. women’s basketball star Brittney Griner was sentenced to nine years in prison after being convicted of bringing marijuana into the country with criminal intent. She pleaded guilty to drug charges last month but said she packed hashish oil by mistake and never intended to violate Russian law. Her sentence is expected to clear the way for negotiations between the U.S. and Russia over her release.

President Biden called on Russia to release Ms. Griner immediately, and said his administration would continue to work to bring Ms. Griner and former Marine Paul Whelan home safely as soon as possible.

The sentence is “one more reminder of what the world already knew: Russia is wrongfully detaining Brittney,” Mr. Biden said Thursday.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 School districts struggle to hire teachers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/crisis-in-the-classroom/weeks-before-a-new-school-year-districts-still-struggle-to-hire-teachers">https://komonews.com/news/crisis-in-the-classroom/weeks-before-a-new-school-year-districts-still-struggle-to-hire-teachers</a>
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — With just a few weeks before the start of a new academic year, many school districts in Washington state are still looking to hire teachers through hundreds of job openings for classroom educators posted online.</p> <p>So, what’s the solution to this crisis in the classroom?</p> <p>“We have as a profession and have always (had) what we call a wage gap,” said Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association, adding that eliminating that wage gap will be the first step to hiring and retaining teachers.</p> <p>An analysis of salaries by the teachers' union shows that educators today are earning on average about \$2,000 less than what they earned 10 years ago.</p> <p>And when compared with other professions that demand the same level of education, Pringle said teachers are paid 20 percent less.</p> <p>“We saw teachers are living out of their cars,” she said. “Teachers who couldn’t afford to take care of their own families.”</p> <p>Many local school districts are struggling to hire enough teachers.</p> <p>The average public school teacher in Washington state earns \$58,893 according to Salary.com, with a pay range that can vary from \$49,187 to \$71,805.</p> <p>So, while the state and individual districts work to raise those salaries, the next step is helping future teachers get the education they need to earn more.</p>

"We will offer the opportunity for you to get your two-year degree or four-year degree through our Horizons Teacher Degree Program," said Felicia Robinson, the chief people and inclusion officer for Bright Horizons. "We have partnerships with about five to seven institutions across the country."

The company has had more than 2,000 employees enroll in their Horizons Teacher Degree Program since it started four years ago, officials said

"It's really one of those things that pays for itself pretty readily," Robinson said.

The only criteria to enroll in the Horizons program is possession of a high school diploma.

Said Robinson: "We need people who really love children and want to be a part of creating future generations of leaders and pouring back into children so that they develop holistically."

The Washington Education Association said just about every district in the state applied for emergency certificates last school year, so that they would hire people who were not yet fully certified to each in Washington.

Those certificates are good for two years.

If you're worried about who will be teaching your children and the number of openings in your district, go to your local district's website or ask your superintendent for that information.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Seattle clears Capitol Hill encampment</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/city-to-clear-homeless-encampment-in-seattles-capitol-hill-neighborhood">https://komonews.com/news/local/city-to-clear-homeless-encampment-in-seattles-capitol-hill-neighborhood</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Crews from the city on Thursday removed an encampment that had taken root adjacent to a Capitol Hill apartment building, whose residents had complained for weeks about nuisance and criminal behavior.</p> <p>For people living at the Bonneville Apartments on East Denny Way, Thursday's homeless encampment cleanup could not come soon enough.</p> <p>"I still sleep with pepper spray," Olha Sheverieva said. "I still need my family to check on my occasionally. I still ask my friends to stay with them when it gets especially bad."</p> <p>Crews from the city arrived around 9 a.m. Thursday to haul away trash and refer people to shelters.</p> <p>Lance Brooke, a resident at Bonneville Apartments, told KOMO News Thursday that he was relieved to see the cleanup.</p> <p>"It's been 10 weeks," Brooke said. "Basically for those of us on ground level, we can't open our windows or blinds because basically there's people out there."</p> <p>In a written statement, Mayor Bruce Harrell's office said: "The City's Unified Care Team coordinated a clean-up of an unauthorized encampment at that location today. The City's HOPE Team outreach staff documented 20 people at this site, with 17 individuals present today during the encampment resolution. Staff recorded 28 tents, seven living structures, and two vehicles on site today. 20 offers of shelter were made, and based on preliminary data, 10 referrals were accepted this week, five of those today."</p> <p>Living on the first floor, Brooke told us he had seen a lot, including "numerous fights."</p> <p>"We've been witness to drug use, blatantly standing in our window." Brooke said.</p>

Among the debris left behind on the ground Thursday, was a bullet next to the apartment building.

"There's been two shootings," Brooke said. "I've called 911 at least 10 times."

At nearby Captain Blacks bar, Jason Llorin, one of the owners, said he was pleasantly surprised to see the sweep being conducted.

"Not sure what to expect," he said. "Just going to see how things go day by day. I hope that everyone that was there has an alternative place to go, or seeks treatment, whatever they need to help them progress forward."

For both of them, the question now turns to sustainability: can those here get directed to shelter and can this area remain free from tents?

Brooke gave a message to the city about their current homelessness program: "Be more involved and show that you care, because right now I don't feel like the city cares."

KOMO News was told so far this year, efforts to reach out to those living in the camps have had more than 660 people referred to shelters.

Most of those former campers go to tiny houses or what is known as enhanced shelter beds with case workers that help with permanent housing.

The city's statement said that as of early June, Seattle had removed approximately 175 unauthorized encampment sites, including obstructions. The city has made nearly 800 shelter referrals to people living unsheltered through the end of June, the city statement said.

The people who live at the Bonneville Apartments say they have been living with violence, drug use and vandalism right outside their windows.

But people in the area worry what happens Thursday will not be a real solution for the city.

"It just moves," Robert Johnson said. "What's here right now was just somewhere else just a couple days ago. it was someone else's problem a few days ago."

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Wind fans flames Inland Northwest wildfires</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/weather/krem-2-weather-forecast/293-a0f43ff2-aa37-4afc-bcfc-b661849f38c1">https://www.krem.com/article/weather/krem-2-weather-forecast/293-a0f43ff2-aa37-4afc-bcfc-b661849f38c1</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — A cold front that is passing through brought another round of gusting wind and high fire danger to much of the Inland Northwest. Increased atmospheric moisture on Thursday meant red flag warnings were not issued, but that didn't stop a new fire from starting and growing near Lind, WA.</p> <p>Fires grew and became aggressive under those conditions. The smoke dropped air quality in eastern Washington and North Idaho. Widespread, air quality remains near moderate. Locally that has dropped to Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups at times.</p> <p>Smell isn't the greatest determiner of air quality, instead it tends to correlate to visibility. As visibility drops below 5 miles, breathing the air start to affect people. If it drops below a couple miles we all need to limit time outdoors.</p> <p>Wind should start pushing the smoke south Thursday evening before calming. The good news is that wind will die down Thursday night as the front moves east. As wind settles, cooler temps take over and fire danger drops through the weekend.</p>



	Calm, dry weather should help fire fighting over the weekend, but by next week, temperatures are once again on the rise. Spokane will top out near 90 both Saturday and Sunday before soaring to near 100 Monday and Tuesday.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 AAA: gas prices drop, less demand</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/money/gas-prices-drop-consumer-demand-aaa">https://www.q13fox.com/money/gas-prices-drop-consumer-demand-aaa</a>
GIST	<p>Gas prices have continued to fall as demand wavers, dropping an average of 17 cents across the U.S. last week, <a href="#">according to AAA</a>.</p> <p>This decrease brought the average price to \$4.35 per gallon for the end of July, as oil prices sit in the mid-\$90s range per barrel, according to AAA. Since reaching a record high of \$5.01 per gallon in mid-June, the price of gas has consistently dipped since then.</p> <p>"Consumers appear to be taking the pressure off their wallets by fueling up less," AAA spokesperson Andrew Gross said. "And there's reason to be cautiously optimistic that pump prices will continue to fall, particularly if the global price for oil does not spike. But the overall situation remains very volatile."</p> <p><b>Gas prices could continue decreasing</b></p> <p>The demand for gas rose slightly last week, from 8.06 million barrels a day to 8.52 million barrels per day, AAA said, citing data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA). But this is down from last year and is in line with the reduced demand in July 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>"If gas demand remains low as stocks increase, alongside a continuing reduction in crude prices, drivers will likely continue to see pump prices decline," AAA said.</p> <p>And as the price of gas decreases, it seems that consumers may be taking steps to reduce their usage to pay even less at the pump.</p> <p>"On June 13 AAA said we hit a new all-time high with the average price of \$5.01, which was \$1.94 more than the year prior – a 63% increase," a spokesperson for Rocket Money said. "Rocket Money, formerly Truebill, saw its members spend 10% more on gas in June compared to the year prior. Clearly, people are carpooling, using public transportation or in some way finding ways to not buy as much gas as they did a year ago."</p> <p><b>This is where gas prices decreased the most</b></p> <p>Gas prices are sliding but have dropped more significantly in some parts of the U.S. than others. These are the states that saw the largest weekly declines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kansas: 29 cents</li> <li>2. Iowa: 25 cents</li> <li>3. Oklahoma: 25 cents</li> <li>4. Missouri: 23 cents</li> <li>5. Ohio: 22 cents</li> <li>6. Wisconsin: 22 cents</li> <li>7. Nebraska: 22 cents</li> <li>8. Delaware: 21 cents</li> <li>9. Wyoming: 21 cents</li> <li>10. Indiana: 21 cents</li> </ol> <p>Additionally, the average price of gas in the U.S. varies by location. Here are the top 10 states with the least expensive average gas prices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Texas: \$3.85</li> <li>2. South Carolina: \$3.86</li> <li>3. Georgia: \$3.88</li> <li>4. Mississippi: \$3.89</li> <li>5. Alabama: \$3.92</li> </ol>

	6. Tennessee: \$3.93 7. Arkansas: \$3.93 8. Louisiana: \$3.94 9. Oklahoma: \$3.96 10. Kentucky: \$4.00
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Monkeypox national health emergency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/health/monkeypox-emergency-us.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/health/monkeypox-emergency-us.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Thursday declared the growing monkeypox outbreak a national health emergency, a rare designation signaling that the virus now represents a significant risk to Americans and setting in motion new measures aimed at containing the threat.</p> <p>The declaration by Xavier Becerra, President Biden’s health secretary, marks just the fifth such <a href="#">national emergency</a> since 2001, and comes as the country remains in a state of emergency over the coronavirus pandemic. The World Health Organization <a href="#">declared a global health emergency</a> over the outbreak late last month.</p> <p>Mr. Becerra’s announcement, at an afternoon news briefing where he was joined by a raft of other top health officials, <a href="#">gives federal agencies power</a> to quickly direct money toward developing and evaluating vaccines and drugs, to gain access to emergency funding and to hire additional workers to help manage the outbreak, which began in May.</p> <p>“We’re prepared to take our response to the next level in addressing this virus,” Mr. Becerra said, adding that “we urge every American to take monkeypox seriously, and to take responsibility to help us tackle this virus.”</p> <p>Mr. Biden has faced intense pressure from public health experts and activists to move more aggressively to combat monkeypox, which has infected more than 6,600 people in the United States. Lawrence O. Gostin, a health law expert at Georgetown University, called Thursday’s declaration “a pivotal turning point in the monkeypox response, after a lackluster start.”</p> <p>Supplies of the monkeypox vaccine, called Jynneos, have been severely constrained, and the administration has been criticized for <a href="#">moving too slowly</a> to expand the number of doses. Less than a decade ago, the United States <a href="#">had 20 million Jynneos doses</a>; by May, the vast majority of them had expired.</p> <p>In <a href="#">echoes of the early coronavirus response</a>, tests have been difficult to obtain, surveillance has been spotty and it has been challenging to get an accurate count of cases. The administration has also been faulted for not doing enough to educate people in the L.G.B.T.Q. community, who are at high risk, before gay pride celebrations in June.</p> <p>“We have 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the world’s cases,” said Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious disease physician at Emory University in Atlanta. “That, to me, honestly, is a failure. We were caught sleeping at the wheel.”</p> <p>To address the vaccine shortage, Dr. Robert Califf, the Food and Drug Administration commissioner, who joined Mr. Becerra on Thursday, said his agency was exploring a strategy that would expand the number of available Jynneos doses by administering the shots differently — into layers of the skin, rather than the fat underneath. If it works, one-fifth of the current dose could be used to protect against the virus.</p> <p>Dr. Califf said the agency was optimistic about the idea and expected to make a final decision “within the next few days,” adding, “It’s important to note that overall safety and efficacy profile will not be sacrificed for this approach.”</p>

Under current regulations, doctors have to navigate byzantine rules to request tecovirimat, the drug recommended for treating the disease, for their patients. The declaration does not change those rules, and federal officials have said they believe the regulations are necessary to ensure that the drug is safe and effective in patients.

Monkeypox, a virus similar to smallpox but with symptoms that are less severe, has in the past primarily been found in parts of Central and West Africa. But in the current outbreak, the United States has the world's largest number of monkeypox cases, and the virus is spreading fast. Less than a month ago, there were about 700 cases; now there are nearly 10 times that many.

More than 99 percent of people infected with monkeypox in this country are men who have sex with men, which has posed a delicate task for public health officials communicating with the public about the threat. They do not want to stigmatize gay people, as happened in the early days of the H.I.V./AIDS epidemic, but neither do they want to downplay their particular risk.

This week, Mr. Biden named a veteran emergency response official, Robert Fenton, and an infectious disease specialist, Dr. Demetre Daskalakis, to coordinate the response from the White House — a sign that the administration was stepping up its attention to the outbreak. Dr. Daskalakis, who is gay, has built deep credibility in the L.G.B.T.Q. community over his career. Both he and Mr. Fenton were on Thursday's call.

Monkeypox is transmitted mostly during close physical contact. The infection is rarely fatal — no deaths have been reported in the United States — but it can be very painful. The number of cases is expected to rise as the virus continues to spread and as surveillance and testing improve, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said on Thursday.

“Two things are happening at once that I think can account for the rise in cases that we're seeing: One is more widely available testing, and two, potentially more infections that are actually happening,” Dr. Walensky said, adding that “it's hard to disentangle those right now.”

The emergency declaration that Mr. Becerra issued on Thursday falls under a specific section of federal law that allows the health secretary to declare an emergency that generally lasts for 90 days, but may be extended. But it does not grant the F.D.A. authority to give emergency authorization to vaccines, tests and treatments; that requires a separate declaration.

“It should help galvanize more testing and more health care provider awareness, especially in places outside the big cities where the level of attention to this has been far less,” said Tom Inglesby, the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, who has helped the Biden administration with its coronavirus response.

Anne Rimoin, an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a member of the W.H.O.'s advisory panel on monkeypox, said the declaration would send “a strong message that this is important, that it must be dealt with now.”

Dr. Rimoin is one of the scientific advisers who urged the W.H.O. to categorize monkeypox as a “public health emergency of international concern,” a designation the organization has used only seven times since 2007. With panelists divided on the matter, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the W.H.O.'s director general, overruled the advisers to declare monkeypox a global emergency, a status currently held by only two other diseases, Covid-19 and polio.

In the United States, demands for stronger action against monkeypox have intensified recently and several states — California, Illinois and New York — have declared their own health emergencies. Recently, Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California, called on the Biden administration to step up the manufacturing and distribution of vaccines, and develop a long-term strategy for combating the virus.

Senator Patty Murray, Democrat of Washington and the chairwoman of the Senate health committee, pushed the Department of Health and Human Services to provide a detailed account of the steps it is taking to contain the outbreak.

Gay rights activists, who have been sharply critical of the administration, have been demanding an emergency declaration for weeks. “This is all too late,” said James Krellenstein, a founder of PrEP4All, an advocacy group that works to expand treatment for people with H.I.V. “I don’t really understand why they didn’t do this weeks ago.”

The F.D.A.’s plan to consider fractional doses of Jynneos took some federal scientists by surprise.

There is some data to suggest that injecting one-fifth of a regular dose of Jynneos between skin layers would be just as effective as the approach being used now, administering a full dose under the skin. The skin is rich in immune cells that mediate the response to vaccines, so this approach is sometimes used, especially with vaccines in short supply, although it requires more skill.

Researchers at the National Institutes of Health had planned to test the strategy for Jynneos in a clinical trial that was set to begin in a few weeks, with results expected later in the fall.

“That was our plan, so we’ll have to see how it fits into the new landscape, which has changed,” said Dr. Emily Erbelding, who directs the N.I.H.’s division of microbiology and infectious diseases. “We thought that there was a desire to get a more robust data set, but if it’s a race against time, then this is a different situation.”

“Things are moving fast,” she added.

Declaring an emergency gives the C.D.C. more access to information from health care providers and from states.

During the outbreak, federal health officials have regularly shared information on testing capacity or on the number of vaccines shipped to states. But the C.D.C.’s data on the number of cases lags that of local public health departments, and the number of people vaccinated, or their demographic information, is mostly unavailable.

“We are again really challenged by the fact that we at the agency have no authority to receive those data,” Dr. Walensky, the C.D.C.’s director, said recently at an event hosted by The Washington Post.

The agency is working to broaden its access to state data, but in the meantime, the information is spotty and unreliable. Local health departments are underfunded, understaffed and exhausted after more than two years of grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic.

“A declaration of this monkeypox outbreak as a public health emergency is important, but more important is to step up the level of federal, state and local coordination, fill our gaps in vaccine supply and get money appropriated from Congress to address this crisis,” said Gregg Gonslaves, an epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health and an adviser to the W.H.O. on monkeypox.

“Otherwise,” he said, “we’re talking about a new endemic virus sinking its roots into this country.”

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HEADLINE	08/04 How serious is monkeypox?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/article/monkeypox-virus-covid.html">https://www.nytimes.com/article/monkeypox-virus-covid.html</a>
GIST	Monkeypox cases are increasing worldwide, including in the United States, which has declared the outbreak a <a href="#">national health emergency</a> . Since the disease was first detected in the U.S. in May, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have <a href="#">confirmed thousands of cases</a> . Worldwide, there are

more than 25,000 confirmed cases, and the World Health Organization has also activated its highest level of alert for monkeypox.

After more than two years of a pandemic, it is understandable that the news of a new virus spreading across the globe could cause alarm, but health experts say that monkeypox is unlikely to create a scenario similar to that of the coronavirus, even as more cases are found. “As surveillance expands, we do expect that more cases will be seen. But we need to put this into context because it’s not Covid,” Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, the W.H.O.’s technical lead on Covid-19, said in a live online Q. and A. on May 23.

Monkeypox is not a new virus, and it spreads primarily through close contact, so we asked experts for a better understanding of the pathogen — and how the disease it causes is different from [Covid-19](#).

### **How contagious is monkeypox?**

In the past, people typically caught monkeypox by coming into close contact with infected animals. That could be through an animal bite, scratch, bodily fluids, feces or by consuming meat that isn’t cooked enough, said Ellen Carlin, a researcher at Georgetown University who studies zoonotic diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans.

The virus was first discovered in laboratory monkeys in 1958, which is how it got its name, but scientists think rodents are the main carriers of monkeypox in the wild. It is primarily found in Central and West Africa, particularly in areas close to tropical rainforests — and rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian pouched rats and dormice have all been identified as potential carriers.

“The virus has probably been circulating in these animals for a very, very long time,” Dr. Carlin said. “And for the most part, it has stayed in animal populations.”

The first human case of monkeypox was detected in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since then, the virus [periodically caused small outbreaks](#), though most were limited to a few hundred cases in 11 African countries.

A handful of cases also made it to other continents in the past, [brought by travelers](#) or the import of exotic animals that [passed the virus to house pets](#) and then to their owners.

It is possible that the virus has evolved to become more transmissible in this outbreak. Researchers who have sequenced the monkeypox virus from recent cases have noted several mutations, but it may take some time to understand the role of these changes. Still, many experts believe that monkeypox can be contained. “Transmission is really happening from close physical contact, skin-to-skin contact. So it’s quite different from Covid in that sense,” Dr. Van Kerkhove said.

The virus can also spread by touching or sharing infected items like clothing and bedding, or by the respiratory droplets produced by sneezing or coughing, [according to the W.H.O.](#)

That may sound eerily familiar because in the early days of the pandemic many experts said that the coronavirus also had little human-to-human transmission beyond respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces. Later research showed that the coronavirus can spread through much smaller particles called aerosols with the ability to travel distances [greater than six feet](#). But that doesn’t mean the same will turn out to be true for the monkeypox virus, said Luis Sigal, an expert in poxviruses at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

Other routes of monkeypox transmission include from mother to fetus via the placenta or during close contact during and after birth.

A majority of cases this year have been in young men, many of whom self-identify as men who have sex with men.

### **Can monkeypox spread through sex?**

It is difficult to disentangle whether monkeypox is transmitted sexually or just through close skin-to-skin contact, like kissing, touching or cuddling during sex. This ambiguity has led to [fierce debate](#) over not only how the virus is transmitted but also how to refer to it.

Some experts and academics are concerned about the stigma that comes with labeling monkeypox a sexually transmitted infection. Others argue that it is important to acknowledge sex as a possible risk factor in order to help those who are most vulnerable right now — men who have sex with men. But this debate has created confusion about how much of a risk monkeypox poses to other groups, including women and children.

“It’s a fine line that many people are walking right now,” said Perry Halkitis, dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health. “The minute you say it’s a disease that only gay men get, it can become stigmatized, because unlike heterosexual sex, homosexual sex tends to be stigmatized by a portion of the population the United States.”

Anyone can potentially catch and transmit monkeypox, but the number of cases in women and children has remained relatively small, even as testing has expanded around the globe.

Currently, the risk to the general population is pretty low. People are unlikely to get monkeypox in shared spaces like schools and offices, or by trying on clothes in stores, as some social media posts have suggested, said Dr. Seth Blumberg, an expert in infectious diseases at the University of California, San Francisco.

In a [study](#) of more than 500 cases that were reported in 16 countries between April and June, researchers found that 98 percent of monkeypox cases were among men who have sex with men. “We would expect to see more cases appear in other social networks if this was spreading by air, for example, or through more casual contact,” said Dr. Jay Varma, a physician and epidemiologist who specializes in infectious diseases at Weill Cornell Medical School in New York City.

Other evidence also points to sex as a likely route of transmission. Many cases in the recent outbreak have involved presentation of lesions or pustules on genital regions, rather than the classic flu-like symptoms of monkeypox followed by a body-wide rash. [Several small studies](#) have also found monkeypox virus DNA in semen and other bodily fluids collected from patients, although it is not clear yet whether the virus found there is able to replicate and infect another individual.

As a precaution, some public health experts have suggested that those at risk of monkeypox temporarily [reduce their number of partners](#) to reduce their risk and avoid sex if they do get sick, as well as abstain from kissing or touching other people’s bodies. The W.H.O. has also updated its guidance to recommend that those who have a confirmed or suspected monkeypox infection [use condoms](#) during sex for 12 weeks after they have completely recovered to reduce the risk of spreading monkeypox to partners.

And health experts agree that, regardless of whether or not monkeypox is considered an S.T.I., there is an urgent need to get [vaccines, tests and treatments](#) to men who have sex with men — the group at highest risk for monkeypox.

### **What are the symptoms and how bad can a monkeypox infection get?**

Monkeypox is typically a mild and self-limiting condition, according to the [C.D.C.](#) On average, symptoms appear within six to 13 days of exposure, but can take up to three weeks. People who get sick commonly experience a fever, headache, back and muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes and general exhaustion.

About one to three days after getting a fever, most people also develop a painful rash that is characteristic of poxviruses. It starts with flat red marks on a patient’s face, hands, feet, mouth or genitals that become raised and filled with pus over the course of the next five to seven days. Many



recent cases have only involved a single lesion or a few pustules on the genitals that do not spread to the rest of the body. (While chickenpox causes a similar-looking rash, it is not a true poxvirus, but is caused by the unrelated varicella-zoster virus.)

Once an individual's pustules scab over and the scabs fall off, in [two to four weeks](#), they are no longer infectious, said Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

Children and people with underlying immune deficiencies may have more severe cases, but monkeypox is rarely fatal. While one strain found in Central Africa can kill up to 10 percent of infected individuals, there have been no confirmed deaths reported outside Africa during the current outbreak.

The easily identifiable rash of monkeypox, as well as its earlier symptoms, could be considered beneficial. "One of the most challenging things about Covid has been that it can be spread asymptomatically or pre-symptomatically, by people who have no idea that they're infected," Dr. Rasmussen said. Most experts say that monkeypox generally becomes contagious after symptoms appear, though in some cases the symptoms may be mild. There are still plenty of opportunities to transmit monkeypox in the first few days of an infection, when symptoms are not as noticeable.

### **Do I need to worry about a rising threat?**

DNA viruses like monkeypox are generally [very stable and evolve extremely slowly](#) compared with RNA viruses like the coronavirus or Ebola, Dr. Sigal said. Scientists are trying to understand if the infectiousness, severity or other characteristics of the virus have changed based on genetic sequences collected from some patients, he said. "But my expectation is that they will not be any different."

Nevertheless, experts have some explanations for the rise in frequency of outbreaks in Africa. Research has shown that incidences of humans contracting viruses from contact with animals — also known as zoonotic spillovers — have become more common in recent decades. Increasing urbanization and deforestation means that humans and wild animals are coming into contact more often. Some animals that carry zoonotic viruses, like bats and rodents, have actually [become more abundant, while others have expanded or adapted their habitats](#) because of urban development and climate change.

"There's more opportunities for relatively rare pathogens to get into new communities, find new hosts and travel to new places," Dr. Rasmussen said.

Despite a brief pandemic lull, people are also [traveling more frequently](#) and to [more parts of the world](#) than they did just a decade ago. And now that community transmission of monkeypox is occurring many parts of the world, new cases may not always have a history of direct travel to endemic countries in Africa.

"The main risk for people these days with regards to viruses remains Covid," Dr. Rasmussen said. "The good news there is that a lot of the same measures that will reduce your risk of Covid — social distancing, wearing masks in public spaces, practicing good hand hygiene and surface disinfection — will also reduce your risk of getting monkeypox."

### **What is the treatment for monkeypox?**

If you get sick, the treatment for monkeypox generally involves symptom management. However, there is one antiviral drug, called tecovirimat or TPOXX, that occasionally can be used for severe monkeypox.

There is also a vaccine, called Jynneos, that the Food and Drug Administration [approved in 2019](#), for people 18 and older, that protects against smallpox and monkeypox. Health officials stopped routinely vaccinating Americans against smallpox in 1972, when the disease was eradicated in the United States. But on June 28, federal health officials announced that states could get doses of Jynneos from the national stockpile and begin offering the vaccine to [anyone who may have been exposed to the virus](#).

The vaccine can work both before and after exposure to monkeypox. If someone who has been in close contact with a known case gets the first dose of monkeypox vaccine right away, it may help reduce the symptoms of disease. According to the C.D.C., the first dose should ideally be taken within four days but can be taken up to two weeks after an exposure occurs. (Vaccination requires a total of two doses, with the second dose taken four weeks after the first).

If you have a new rash or are concerned about monkeypox, the C.D.C. urges you to contact your health care provider. The agency has asked doctors [to be on the alert](#) for signs of the telltale rash, and recommends that men who may have been exposed to monkeypox get vaccinated as soon as possible.

“It’s really hard to put a timeline on when this will be contained, or how easy it will be,” Dr. Rasmussen said. “But we have the pharmacological tools, in combination with the classic isolation and quarantine procedures that have helped contain monkeypox outbreaks in the past. We can contain it again. The key is going to be identifying all the cases.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 Japan seeks China to halt Taiwan drills</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/world/asia/taiwan-china-military-drills.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/world/asia/taiwan-china-military-drills.html</a>
GIST	<p>Japan’s leader on Friday called for China to stop its military exercises around Taiwan, a day after five of the Chinese missiles launched during the drills landed in waters claimed by Japan for its exclusive economic use.</p> <p>Prime Minister Fumio Kishida called for “an immediate halt” to the exercises, which he said were having “a serious impact on the peace and stability of the region and the world,” Kyodo News reported. He spoke to reporters after meeting with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whose high-profile visit to Taiwan this week infuriated China and led to the military drills.</p> <p>Ms. Pelosi said that China “may try to keep Taiwan from visiting or participating in other places but they will not isolate Taiwan.”</p> <p>At least 11 Chinese missiles <a href="#">landed in waters to the north, south and east of Taiwan</a> on Thursday, the first day of the exercises, which are scheduled to end on Sunday. The People’s Liberation Army of China said they had “all precisely hit their targets.” Japan said five of them had fallen into its exclusive economic zone, outside its territorial waters.</p> <p>The exercises appeared to be continuing on Friday morning. Taiwan’s defense ministry said Chinese ships and aircraft had crossed the informal median line in the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island from the Chinese mainland.</p> <p>The defense ministry said it had dispatched its own aircraft and ships and deployed land-based missile systems to monitor the situation.</p> <p>China claims Taiwan, a self-governing democracy off its southern coast, as its own territory, and regards visits by American politicians as an affront. Ms. Pelosi <a href="#">met with Taiwan’s president, lawmakers and human rights activists</a> on Wednesday, hailing the island’s commitment to democracy.</p> <p>Besides demonstrating Beijing’s displeasure with her visit, the drills — scheduled to be held in six zones encircling Taiwan — appear to have been designed as a trial run for sealing off the island as part of a potential invasion. China’s leaders, including the current one, Xi Jinping, have long said that Taiwan must eventually be brought under Beijing’s control, by force if necessary.</p> <p>Criticism of China’s actions in the Taiwan Strait by the United States and its allies apparently prompted Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, to walk out of a gala dinner in Cambodia’s capital on Thursday night, moments before diplomats attending a regional conference were to be seated. Japan’s foreign minister, Yoshimasa Hayashi, had just issued a formal protest to China when Mr. Wang left.</p>

Earlier in the day, Mr. Wang had accused the United States of instigating the situation around Taiwan. “It is the United States that stirred up the trouble; it is the United States that created the crisis, and it is also the United States that kept escalating tensions,” Mr. Wang told foreign ministers attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations forum in Phnom Penh.

The Chinese drills have [put the United States in a delicate position](#). While the Pentagon wants to project strength in the region, it is also sensitive to the risk that a military miscalculation near the island could set off an unintended escalation.

The Biden administration is intent on avoiding an incident like the 2001 collision between an American P-3 intelligence plane and a Chinese fighter jet over waters off China’s southern coast. The U.S. plane made a forced landing on Hainan island, a southern province of China, and more than 20 crew members were taken captive for 11 days. The plane was stripped by the Chinese and eventually returned to the United States in crates.

John Kirby, a national security spokesman, said on Thursday that the Pentagon had ordered the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan to “remain on station” in the region, but some distance from the entrance to the Taiwan Strait. That represents a more cautious move than one made during a crisis over Taiwan in 1996, when President Bill Clinton moved aircraft carriers closer to the strait.

The United States will resume “standard air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks,” Mr. Kirby added, an indication that the White House wants the Chinese exercises to end first.

In Washington, a former C.I.A. analyst, John Culver, said at a meeting of the Center for Strategic and International Studies on Thursday that a new low had been reached in the already fraught relationship between the United States and China.

“We’re in a new era,” said Mr. Culver, who was the national intelligence officer for East Asia at the National Intelligence Council from 2015 to 2018. “It’s not the mid-90s anymore. The context is entirely different.”

On Friday morning, the United States Navy’s 7th Fleet posted [photos on Twitter](#) of fighter jets on the deck of U.S.S. Ronald Reagan during what it said were “flight operations” in the Philippine Sea, southeast of Taiwan.

It was unclear Friday how the rest of China’s exercises would play out. China’s Eastern Theater Command, which encompasses Taiwan, has [said that it was mobilizing](#) more than 100 fighter planes, bombers and other aircraft, as well as more than 10 destroyers and frigates, according to Reuters.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 China sends stark signal to Japan, US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/world/asia/china-japan-taiwan-missiles.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/world/asia/china-japan-taiwan-missiles.html</a>
GIST	<p>TOKYO — North Korea has for years lobbed missiles into Japan’s waters without great incident. But for an increasingly powerful and aggressive China to do the same — as it did Thursday as a part of military exercises — has sharply raised concerns in political and security circles from Tokyo to Washington.</p> <p>Beijing’s firing of five missiles into waters that are part of Japan’s exclusive economic zone, to the east of Taiwan, has sent a warning to both the United States and Japan about coming to the aid of Taiwan in the event of a conflict there, analysts said.</p> <p>Beijing wants to remind Washington that it can strike not only Taiwan, but also American bases in the region, such as Kadena air base on Okinawa, as well as any marine invasion forces, said Thomas G. Mahnken, a former Pentagon official who is now president of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington.</p>

It also reminds the Japanese that the American military presence on Okinawa makes Japan a target, he added.

Daniel Sneider, an expert on Japan's foreign relations at Stanford University, said the Chinese "want to demonstrate that they have the capability to impose a blockade on Taiwan, and they want to send a very clear message to those that would come to the aid of Taiwan — the U.S. and Japan — that they can target them as well."

"If anyone in Japan thought they could avoid involvement in a conflict in the Taiwan Strait," Mr. Sneider added, "the Chinese have demonstrated that's not the case."

Analysts also suggested that China's military exercises in the waters around Taiwan seem likely to alter the status quo in the region, just as exercises in 1995 and 1996 obliterated the median line in the center of the Taiwan Strait.

"This exercise will last for only three days," said Tetsuo Kotani, professor of international relations at Meikai University and a senior fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, "but this kind of massive exercise will possibly become routine over the next few years."

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whose visit to Taiwan this week ignited regional tensions, arrived in Japan Thursday night and is expected to meet with top Japanese politicians on Friday, starting with a breakfast with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Some analysts have argued that if Beijing's intent was to intimidate Japan, the missile shots might have the opposite effect on Japan's leaders.

"Seeing something like this unfolding and having Chinese missiles landing in Japan's economic zone may actually accelerate the argument for a more rapid increase in defense spending," said Yuki Tatsumi, director of the Japan program at the Stimson Center, a Washington think tank.

Japan has for years warily eyed the growing strength of its neighbor, and has begun plans to take more responsibility for its own defense, working closer with its allies to counter China and relying less on Washington.

That evolution from its pacifist, postwar orientation gained new impetus with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, after which the ruling Liberal Democrats recommended doubling military spending to 2 percent of gross domestic product.

More hawkish politicians have pushed for Japan to develop a first-strike capability with conventionally armed missiles, and even suggested that the country could one day host American nuclear weapons as a deterrent. Such talk would have been unthinkable a decade ago.

Taiwan, only 68 miles from a Japanese military base on Yonaguni Island, in Okinawa prefecture, lies at the center of Tokyo's security concerns. It is one of Japan's largest trade partners, is a major source of advanced computer chips and lies astride a narrow strait through which virtually all of Japan's energy resources are shipped.

Policymakers fear that any military confrontation over the island would inevitably draw in Japan, which hosts U.S. military bases on nearby Okinawa and has had a contentious territorial dispute with Beijing over the Senkaku Islands.

In its most recent white paper, Japan's Defense Ministry cautioned that the country should have "a sense of crisis" over the possibility of a U.S.-China confrontation.

Preparing for such an event, military planners have increased coordination with American forces and moved more troops and missile batteries to islands in southern Japan, which could be on the front lines of a clash.

In December, during remarks to a Taiwanese policy organization, Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister, who was assassinated last month, warned that a “Taiwan crisis would be a Japan crisis. In other words, a crisis for the U.S.-Japan alliance.”

In an opinion article in April in The Los Angeles Times, he called for the United States to clarify its policy of “strategic ambiguity” toward the island, arguing that it is “fostering instability in the Indo-Pacific region, by encouraging China to underestimate American resolve.”

The Japanese public has taken a keen interest in the question of Taiwan’s security in recent years, as worries have grown about supply chains, China’s regional military activity and its treatment of Uighurs and its hostility to democratic governance in Hong Kong. Since the start of the pandemic, public opinion has shifted decisively against China, while support for Taiwan has grown apace.

Shortly after the missiles landed, Tokyo issued a formal protest to China and called on it to immediately stop its military exercises near Taiwan, Japan’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Speaking to reporters, Japan’s defense minister, Nobuo Kishi, called the incident “a grave issue that concerns our national security and the safety of the people.”

Earlier on Thursday, before the missiles were fired, Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, had told reporters that Beijing did not recognize Japan’s economic zone, where the missiles landed.

China also called off a meeting between its foreign minister, Wang Yi, and his Japanese counterpart, Yoshimasa Hayashi, after the Group of 7 industrialized nations issued a statement expressing concern about Beijing’s “threatening actions” around Taiwan.

The missile incident is in some ways a familiar routine for Japan, which has seen 10 North Korean ballistic missiles land in its economic zone since 2016. In the short term, according to Ms. Tatsumi, the analyst, Japan’s response to Beijing is likely to follow the same playbook as with Pyongyang: diplomatic protests and more vigilance.

“Japan definitely does not want to be blamed by China for quote unquote overreacting,” she said, “so they won’t counter with anything physical, but their monitoring will ramp up.”

In the longer term, however, China should expect Japan to harden itself militarily, she said.

“It will not slow down Japan’s debate on increasing its defense spending,” she added. “If anything it will probably accelerate it, and it will also accelerate conversations between the U.S. and Japan.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Lakewood pays \$25K: violated records law</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article264157951.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article264157951.html</a>
GIST	<p>The state Court of Appeals ruled last month that the city of Lakewood didn’t perform a proper search of police records related to the high-profile killing of a self-described antifascist near Lacey and couldn’t rectify the error by providing documents to a local public-records activist once he’d already filed a lawsuit.</p> <p>As a result, the Lakewood City Council voted Monday to offer the plaintiff in the lawsuit, Arthur West, \$25,000 for the city’s violation of the state Public Records Act. West told The News Tribune on Wednesday he planned to accept the settlement.</p>

The underlying incident involved the 2020 police killing of Michael Forest Reinoehl, a Portland activist who was suspected of fatally shooting far-right Patriot Prayer supporter Aaron “Jay” Danielson during a clash between protesters in Oregon. Reinoehl claimed in an interview with Vice that he was protecting a friend from getting stabbed.

A Lakewood police officer, two Pierce County sheriff’s deputies and a state Department of Corrections officer working as a part of a U.S. Marshals task force killed Reinoehl in a hail of 37 bullets that damaged surrounding homes in Tanglewilde, near Lacey in Thurston County. A Thurston County Sheriff’s Department investigation determined Reinoehl fired first but his handgun was in his pocket when he died, and detectives found no video of the shooting.

When West asked Lakewood for records from the incident, he misspelled Reinoehl’s name in the body of his request. West spelled the name correctly in the subject line and the city had received similar records requests.

Lakewood told West it had no records to give him because the case remained an active investigation in Thurston County and a search of city emails and texts for the misspelled version of Reinoehl’s name didn’t turn up any results.

West filed a lawsuit in December 2020 alleging the city violated the state Public Records Act. He also sued Thurston County and the state Department of Corrections for improperly withholding records from the incident.

He told The News Tribune he was concerned the investigation was improper because only the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department provided records under his initial request.

Lakewood opened a new records request for West after a city official learned about the lawsuit but prior to the complaint being served to the city.

The city found more than 7,700 pages of records and 11 text messages after using the proper spelling of Reinoehl and adding locations from the incident to the search terms. West received the last of the records in February 2021.

The discovery of the documents confirmed for West that Lakewood had indeed violated the Public Records Act, he said.

Pierce County Superior Court Judge Karena Kirkendoll ruled in favor of Lakewood, but the state Court of Appeals reversed her decision last month.

“Taking into account the correct spelling of Reinoehl’s name at the top of West’s request, the results of White’s internet search on the topic, Lieutenant Lawler’s knowledge of the event, and the City’s responses to related requests, there were multiple obvious leads that the City did not follow up on,” a panel of judges ruled in a slip opinion.

The ruling continued later, “Allowing a government agency to resist disclosure of records until a suit is filed and then disclose them voluntarily to cure any error ‘flouts the purpose’ of the PRA.”

West said his Thurston County lawsuit is under review by the state Court of Appeals, and he expects oral arguments this fall.

“I am surprised that the trial court didn’t catch it originally,” West said of the Lakewood decision. “But that’s how the system works, and the Court of Appeals” ruled correctly.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/residents-of-eastern-washington-town-told-to-leave-due-to-wildfire-homes-lost/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/residents-of-eastern-washington-town-told-to-leave-due-to-wildfire-homes-lost/</a>
GIST	<p>LIND, Wash. (AP) — An entire eastern Washington town was evacuated Thursday because of a growing wildfire south of town that was burning homes, officials said.</p> <p>At about 1:30 p.m. Thursday the Adams County Sheriff’s Office said on Facebook that about 10 homes in Lind had burned.</p> <p>“At this time all residents of the town of Lind need to evacuate immediately,” the sheriff’s office said in the post, adding that people could seek shelter at the Ritzville Grade School.</p> <p>Later Thursday, officials clarified that six homes had burned as well as eight other structures.</p> <p>Washington Department of Natural Resources officials said Thursday they expected the fire to pass through town, but Sheriff Dale J. Wagner said at about 5 p.m. that some evacuations had been lifted.</p> <p>“The information I have right now is it is starting to calm down,” Wagner said about the fire via Facebook video. “They will be fighting it through the night to make sure it doesn’t flare up anymore or get worse,” he said, adding that firefighters were dealing with high heat and windy conditions.</p> <p>By 8 p.m., the sheriff’s office posted on Facebook, “All evacuation restrictions are lifted people can return.”</p> <p>One firefighter suffered smoke inhalation and was flown to Spokane for treatment, the sheriff said.</p> <p>The State Fire Marshal’s office said Thursday that state fire assistance was mobilized to help fight the fire, estimated to have burned about 3.9 square miles (10.1 square kilometers). Homes, infrastructure and crops were threatened, officials said. The cause of the blaze was under investigation.</p> <p>Westbound State Route 21 at State Route 395 was temporarily closed in that area. At about 3:30 p.m., two airplanes and one helicopter had responded to help fight the fire, according to the sheriff’s office.</p> <p>Lind, with a population of about 500 people, is located about 75 miles (121 kilometers) southwest of Spokane.</p> <p>The new blaze was one of several that sparked this week around Washington.</p> <p>A fire southwest of Spokane that started Wednesday burned at least two structures and authorities there were telling people in dozens of homes to evacuate. The state Department of Natural Resources said Thursday that the Williams Lake Fire had grown to 5 square miles (10.3 square kilometers) and was less than 10% contained.</p> <p>Spokane County Fire District #3 Chief Cody Rorbach said two structures were destroyed. It wasn’t immediately known if those were primary residences, or actively in use. Williams Lake is about 32 miles (51.5 kilometers) south of Spokane.</p> <p>The Cow Canyon Fire about 12 miles (19.3 kilometers) southwest of Ellensburg was also threatening structures and prompting mandatory evacuations after starting Wednesday afternoon.</p> <p>That blaze prompted emergency evacuation notices for about 50 homes or structures 10 miles north of Naches, The Seattle Times reported. The fire had grown to 8.75 square miles (22. 6 square kilometers) by Thursday morning.</p> <p>The Vantage Highway Fire near the town of Vantage, Washington, started Monday and as of Thursday had burned a cabin and three outbuildings, officials said on Thursday. The blaze was estimated at 26.5</p>

	<p>square miles (68.6 square kilometers) with about 25% containment. Earlier evacuation orders for residents had been lifted as of Thursday.</p> <p>Climate change has made the West warmer and drier over the last three decades and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive, according to scientists.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Seattle-area home prices dip, market cools</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/seattle-area-home-prices-dip-as-market-cools/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/seattle-area-home-prices-dip-as-market-cools/</a>
GIST	<p>The Seattle-area housing market continues to cool off.</p> <p>More homes are sitting on the market awaiting a buyer. Fewer buyers are signing deals. And prices are dipping faster than usual, as a typical summer slowdown meets higher interest rates, priced-out buyers and economic jitters.</p> <p>According to new data released Thursday from the Northwest Multiple Listing Service, more than twice as many single-family homes were still for sale across much of the region at the end of July than at the same time last year. The number of condos for sale in King County was up 15.5%.</p> <p>Median home prices around the region continue to dip. Since May, prices in King County have dropped 11%, or \$109,000. During the same span last year, prices were flat.</p> <p>And while home prices are still up from last year, that growth is slowing down. The median home price in Snohomish County is up 10%. Last July: 22%.</p> <p>That's all good news for buyers still in the game. But their budgets are still taking a hit.</p> <p>The median single-family home sold for \$890,000 in King County, \$770,000 in Snohomish County and \$575,000 in Pierce County last month. Across the water in Kitsap County, the median house sold for \$538,000.</p> <p>The average rate on the 30-year mortgage many buyers need to purchase a home ticked down a bit in late July, but still ended the month 2 percentage points higher than the start of the year. A 1% interest rate hike can cut a buyer's budget by 10%.</p> <p>Add that to already high prices — median prices in Snohomish and Pierce counties are up \$200,000 or more from 2019 — and buyers are squeezed.</p> <p>As the market cools off, it would now take nearly two months to sell through all the single-family homes for sale at current demand across the region. The last time inventory was at that level was in late 2018 and early 2019, when the region's housing market was going through <a href="#">another slowdown</a>.</p> <p>But "anything under six months is still considered a seller's market," said Jed Kliman, a Windermere broker in Greenwood.</p> <p>Combine all this — prices, sales and how quickly homes fly off the market — and the Seattle area was cooling the fastest of any major housing market in the country in June, according to an analysis by Redfin.</p> <p>"The stock market and the tech sector in particular has been weighing on all of these metros that have a high concentration of tech workers," said Redfin deputy chief economist Taylor Marr.</p> <p>Tacoma ranked No. 10, in part because the area saw fewer price drops than Seattle, Marr said.</p>

	<p>Despite the rapid change, Redfin’s economists predict Seattle’s housing market is less vulnerable to a dramatic slide in a recession than many other cities, such as Boise, Idaho, and Phoenix. That ranking relies on 10 measures of price volatility, debt-to-income ratio, flipping, second homes and other factors.</p> <p>Marr predicts Seattle-area prices will continue to decline this year, though how dramatically depends in part on the rest of the economy.</p> <p>Kliman, the Windermere agent, predicts homeowners who locked in ultralow interest rates earlier in the pandemic may be hesitant to sell. That would keep a ceiling on inventory and force buyers to continue competing.</p> <p>Houses Kliman recently listed for sale didn’t draw the 10- or 15-offer bidding wars that became common last year. King County saw nearly 29% fewer pending single-family home sales and 34% fewer condo sales in July than at the same time last year, according to the listing service.</p> <p>But Kliman said his listings still drew several competing offers each.</p> <p>“The bidding wars that I’ve seen have not been 20 or 30% over list price recently. They’ve been more like 5 or 10% over,” he said. “That’s a reflection of a more balanced-feeling market.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Minimum wage not enough offset rent price</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/wa-tenants-need-to-work-72-hours-a-week-at-minimum-wage-to-afford-rent/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/wa-tenants-need-to-work-72-hours-a-week-at-minimum-wage-to-afford-rent/</a>
GIST	<p>Significant increases to Washington’s minimum wage have not been enough to offset rising rent prices for scores of workers across the state.</p> <p>A minimum-wage worker in Washington would need to work 72 hours each week to afford a typical one-bedroom apartment. In King and Snohomish counties, that stretches past 90 hours a week.</p> <p>The figures, calculated each year by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, highlight how difficult it can be to budget for Washington’s rising rents. That’s true even as workers have new leverage in the job market, and even for those making far beyond Washington’s \$14.49 minimum wage.</p> <p>To afford a two-bedroom apartment in the Seattle-Bellevue area, an hourly worker would need to make about \$39 an hour, or roughly \$81,000 a year, according to the report.</p> <p>That’s more than twice Seattle’s current minimum wage of <a href="#">\$17.27 for large employers</a>. It’s also higher than the \$36 an hour the average renter in the area makes, according to the coalition’s report.</p> <p>In Snohomish County, the average renter makes about \$22 an hour, but would need to make \$33 to afford a one-bedroom and \$39 to afford a two-bedroom. In Kitsap County, the average renter makes about \$8 less than needed for a one-bedroom and \$16 less than for a two-bedroom.</p> <p>The analysis uses a <a href="#">common threshold</a> for “affording” a home: Housing costs should take up no more than 30% of monthly income to leave room for other costs and savings. But that’s impossible for many workers.</p> <p><a href="#">Four in 10</a> renters in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area pay more than 30% of their income for rent, and 1 in 5 spend more than half, according to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. In Seattle, Black, Native American and Pacific Islander renters are <a href="#">more likely</a> to spend a higher share of their income on rent, according to a city analysis last year.</p> <p>All of that adds up to tighter budgets with less room for an unexpected car repair, medical expense or missed days at work.</p>

“Because people’s budgets are so tight, just one little thing throws it all off and they’re at risk of homelessness,” said Theresa Curry Almuti, homelessness prevention manager at the nonprofit Solid Ground, which counsels tenants who need help with rent.

Add to that rising rents, especially outside of Seattle.

Spokane rents are up 37% since the start of the pandemic, compared to 6.5% in Seattle, according to Apartment List. Rents are up 30% in Auburn, 27% in Everett and 24% in Kent.

Renters flocked to the suburbs out of either desire or necessity early in the pandemic, driving prices up, said Rob Warnock, a researcher at the rental site Apartment List.

“Prices are going up quickly. Vacancy rates are still pretty low. All of the momentum is still in the direction of rent prices going up,” Warnock said.

All of that can make it feel impossible to spend only a third of income on rent, even for tenants making well beyond minimum wage.

When Terrilyn Johnson was looking for a one-bedroom apartment last spring, she thought she would have options.

Johnson is the co-owner of a Seattle underground tour company, made a \$50,000 salary at the time and had good credit and years of good rental history. But prices were higher than she expected. And one requirement appeared over and over: She needed to prove she earned three times the monthly rent.

“I was just meeting that mark. In some cases, I was going to miss it by like \$100,” she said.

She landed a small \$1,400 one-bedroom near Green Lake after she wrote to the building owner about her situation. Now, she wonders what would happen if the owner sold the building.

“How much rent am I going to have to pay now for something comparable?” she said.

Rent estimates like those used by the National Low Income Housing Coalition are still below the costs renters would encounter at newly constructed apartment buildings, said Warnock, from Apartment List.

“It’s a dire situation, even if we have this more conservative way of looking at the cost of housing,” he said.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition report calls on federal officials to spend more on affordable housing construction and preservation, expand rental assistance and legal assistance for renters, and pass more protections against mold, pests and other housing issues.

Johnson has rented since moving to Seattle in the 1990s and doesn’t see herself being able to change that anytime soon.

“I rent because I liked it initially, not having to pay for appliances,” she said. “And then by the time I entertained the idea of buying a home, I couldn’t afford one in Seattle.”

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HEADLINE	08/04 DOH: 166 monkeypox cases
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/health-officials-update-monkeypox-washington/281-de9f93ab-b45c-4bfb-bdc0-78bac08bf1f7">https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/health-officials-update-monkeypox-washington/281-de9f93ab-b45c-4bfb-bdc0-78bac08bf1f7</a>

GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — On Thursday, officials from the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) released new information surrounding monkeypox cases the same day as the federal government declared it a <a href="#">public health emergency</a>.</p> <p>As of Aug. 3, DOH said 166 cases have been reported, with the majority of cases in King County. Other cases were reported in Whatcom, Snohomish, Pierce, Lewis, Yakima, Benton, Cowlitz, Clark, Mason and Kitsap counties.</p> <p>DOH officials said while many counties don't have any confirmed cases, the department expects that to change as a "natural consequence of infectious disease transmission." Officials emphasized that while there has been a disproportionate impact on the LGBTQ+ community, anyone can become infected.</p> <p>"This is a human disease," Secretary of Health Dr. Umair Shah said. "It's about the behaviors, it's not specific to sexual orientation or gender identity, anyone can get (monkeypox) through close contact with someone with a contagious rash related to (monkeypox), or also we believe some transmission potential through touching of linens or clothing that has been exposed to (monkeypox) virus as well."</p> <p>The first confirmed case of monkeypox was May 23 in King County. DOH began a workgroup before activating an Incident Management Team in July.</p> <p>According to Chief Science Officer Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, cases have been roughly doubling every seven to eight days, with all cases occurring among adults.</p> <p>Monkeypox can be spread through contact with rashes, scabs, or fluids and through prolonged respiratory contact. It can also spread through touching the same objects or clothes, though brief interactions are not considered high risk or close contact.</p> <p>"There is no place for stigma in our community's response to monkeypox," he said.</p> <p>DOH requested 96% of the vaccine doses allocated by the federal government, leaving the other 4% for when it identifies more counties or Tribal communities that may need assistance.</p> <p>DOH Director of Community Relations and Equity Naisha Williams said the department has learned lessons from the COVID-19 response, and the reduction strategy will involve engaging with trusted community organizations, community leaders and healthcare providers to connect with community members.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Monkeypox cases double in week</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/monkeypox-cases-doubling-each-week-washington-state/33T7AUQI75F63A4DZQ6UI3UXNY/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/monkeypox-cases-doubling-each-week-washington-state/33T7AUQI75F63A4DZQ6UI3UXNY/</a>
GIST	<p>According to the Washington Department of Health, the number of monkeypox cases across the state has recently doubled on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Health workers said 166 cases of monkeypox have now been diagnosed in people across Washington. They noted that 88% of those cases are in King County alone.</p> <p>Unlike places like California and New York, health workers said there are no current plans to declare a state of emergency.</p> <p>"We just have not had the roadblocks and issues at this point that lead us as a state, with our laws, to have to declare a state of emergency," said Andrew Rose with the Washington Department of Health.</p> <p>Not that there aren't key challenges.</p>

	<p>Among the difficulties health workers face is trying to convince the public that monkeypox isn't just a virus that affects the LGBTQ community.</p> <p>"It hurts the entire community because we do not know as a public health system who has a certain condition and disease so we can help monitor, help support," said Umair Shah, Washington state's secretary of health.</p> <p>Another major challenge is a lack of available vaccines.</p> <p>Across the state, only 6,800 doses are currently available.</p> <p>In the months ahead, 1,700 additional doses are expected to arrive in Washington state.</p> <p>For now, though, only certain at-risk people are allowed to get the monkeypox vaccine.</p> <p>"As more vaccine becomes available, we'll be opening up more broadly to anybody with high risk of exposure, but there's just not enough vaccines at this point," said Michelle Roberts with the Washington Department of Health.</p> <p>As for testing, nine private labs are now up and ready to test monkeypox, should more cases arise.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Bank of England: recession at end of year</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/4/bank-of-england-predicts-recession-at-the-end-of-t/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/4/bank-of-england-predicts-recession-at-the-end-of-t/</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — The Bank of England projected Thursday that the United Kingdom's economy would enter a recession at the end of the year and hiked interest rates by the largest amount in more than 27 years, pushing to tame accelerating inflation driven by the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The rate hike of three-quarters of a point pushes the bank's key interest rate to 1.75%, the highest since the depths of the global financial crisis in December 2008. Most economists expected the hike after Gov. Andrew Bailey said two weeks ago that the United Kingdom's central bank would "act forcefully" if the inflation picture worsened.</p> <p>And worsen it will. Inflation will accelerate to over 13% in the final three months of the year and remain "very elevated" for much of 2023, the bank said. The forecast reflects a sharp increase from the 40-year high of 9.4% recorded in June.</p> <p>The bank's forecasters say inflation will hit its highest point for more than 42 years amid the doubling of wholesale natural gas prices tied to the war. Those energy prices will push the economy into a five-quarter recession - with gross domestic product shrinking each quarter in 2023.</p> <p>"Growth thereafter is very weak by historical standards," the bank said.</p> <p>Central banks worldwide are struggling to control surging inflation without tipping economies into recession that were just beginning to recover from the coronavirus pandemic. Higher interest rates raise borrowing costs for consumers, businesses and the government, which tends to reduce spending and ease rising prices. But such moves are also likely to slow economic growth.</p> <p>The U.S. Federal Reserve has moved aggressively, increasing its key rate by three-quarters of a point in each of the past two months to a range of 2.25% to 2.5%. The European Central Bank's first increase in 11 years was a larger-than-expected half-point hike last month to tame record inflation.</p> <p>The International Monetary Fund last week cut its outlook for global economic growth, citing higher-than-expected inflation, continuing COVID-19 outbreaks in China and further effects from the war in Ukraine.</p>



The U.K. economy is likely to expand just 0.5% next year, the slowest growth rate among the world's advanced economies, the IMF said.

The landscape is especially complicated for central banks because many of the factors driving inflation are beyond their control, particularly food and energy prices that have soared due to uncertainty surrounding Russia's invasion.

But those external pressures are now becoming embedded in the U.K. economy, with public- and private-sector workers demanding wage increases to prevent inflation from eroding their living standards.

"This explains why at the MPC's last meeting we adopted language which made clear that if we see signs of greater persistence of inflation, and price and wage setting would be such signs, we will have to act forcefully," Bailey said in speech last month.

The last time the U.K. approved a similar rate increase was December 1994, when interest rate decisions were still made by the government's treasury chief in consultation with the central bank governor.

The Bank of England predicted that inflation will reach over 13% in the final three months of the year and remain "very elevated" for much of 2023.

"With gas prices continuing to reach record levels, both households and businesses will see large increases in their energy bills throughout the winter and into 2023," said Jack Leslie, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation, a think tank focused on the living standards of low- and middle-income families. "How long this high inflation will last is hugely uncertain, but the cost-of-living crisis looks set to last longer and hit households harder than previously anticipated."

But even with all the pressure for a big increase in interest rates, some economists think the Bank of England will remain cautious as it seeks to protect economic growth.

Dean Turner, an economist at UBS Global Wealth Management, said he is sure the bank will raise rates, just not by how much.

"What is a central banker to do?" he asked. "Should they be prioritizing current inflation, most of which is driven by factors beyond the control of the Bank of England, or the faltering growth backdrop? I do not envy them."

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 ACLU: CBP seized turbans from Sikhs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/04/us-border-patrol-accused-taking-turbans-sikh-asylum-seekers">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/04/us-border-patrol-accused-taking-turbans-sikh-asylum-seekers</a>
GIST	<p>Agents from US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) have been accused of seizing turbans from Sikh asylum seekers at the southern border.</p> <p>In a <a href="#">letter</a> to CBP, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Arizona said there had been nearly 50 documented cases of Sikhs saying religious headwear was taken and never returned as they passed through CBP checks in Yuma, Arizona.</p> <p>The cases were reported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a humanitarian nonprofit that helps asylum seekers released by CBP. The nonprofit has reported a sharp increase in turban confiscations since June.</p> <p>"While [IRC] has encountered cases of religious headwear being confiscated every month of this year," the ACLU said, "in June 2022 the number of reports rose sharply, prompting concern that border officials have ramped up their efforts to seize these sacred items."</p>

The ACLU is asking CBP to investigate the confiscations as civil rights violations, citing policy that says officers should “remain cognizant of an individual’s religious belief while accomplishing an enforcement action in a dignified and respectful manner”.

The ACLU wrote: “For many Sikhs, the turban is a central aspect of their religious identity; exposing their ‘naked’ heads to others is considered sacrilegious and shameful.

“By confiscating and failing to return Sikh individuals’ turbans, CBP directly interferes with their religious practice and forces them to violate their religious beliefs.”

Gurjodh Singh, an asylum seeker from India, told the Intercept and Arizona Luminaria that while he tried to insist to CBP agents his religion forbade taking off his turban, they forced him to remove it and put it in a trash pile.

He said: “They told me to take off my turban. I know a little English and I said, ‘It’s my religion.’ But they insisted. I felt so bad.”

IRC volunteers have contacted local Sikh communities to find replacements for seized turbans. One volunteer, the ACLU said, supplied “more than 50 turbans by soliciting them from family, friends and congregations”.

“Unfortunately, this is not a long-term solution because of the sheer number of turbans needed,” the ACLU added.

The CBP commissioner, Chris Magnus, said an investigation had been opened.

“We take allegations of this nature very seriously,” Magnus said. “Our expectation is that CBP employees treat all migrants we encounter with respect.”

The ACLU said concerns over the confiscation of turbans and other religious clothing were raised in 2019 and 2020 and “despite numerous contacts about this issue, to our knowledge, no meaningful investigation has occurred”.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Disrespect: Navajo farmers wait for justice</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/04/navajo-farmers-epa-disaster-new-mexico">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/04/navajo-farmers-epa-disaster-new-mexico</a>
GIST	<p>On 7 August 2015, crews from the Navajo Nation Irrigation Office in Shiprock rushed to close the main gates of two irrigation canals that carry water from the San Juan River toward the fields of hundreds of Navajo farmers.</p> <p>It was peak growing season in the arid north-western corner of <a href="#">New Mexico</a>. Some 12,000 acres of crops had been planted. And a disaster was threatening all of them.</p> <p>Two days earlier, 115 miles upstream in Colorado, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) accidentally released some 3m gallons of acid mine water from the Gold King mine, during the initial stages of a cleanup operation. Spilling from Cement Creek into the Animas River and then the San Juan, the waterways – poisoned with nearly 540 tons of arsenic, lead, cadmium and other toxic metals – turned a sickly yellow.</p> <p>“It was coming like a big flow of mustard,” recalled Shawn Mike, one of 222 Diné farmers and ranchers <a href="#">suing the EPA</a> for their losses. The plume ultimately flowed more than 340 miles, coursing through tribal lands and three states to Lake Powell in southern Utah.</p> <p>Seven years later, despite public promises to promote environmental justice for Indigenous communities and its admission of responsibility for the disaster, the EPA still refuses to compensate the farmers.</p>

Though the agency has settled lawsuits with state and tribal governments for some \$331m, the Department of Justice, which represents the EPA in court, asserts that individual Navajos – who together are asking for \$49m – have no right to sue.

The impact of the spill hit the irrigators like a one-two punch. First, their crops died from a lack of water when the canals were closed. Then, once the farmers were growing again, they found their produce impossible to sell.

Mike pulls water from the Fruitland ditch, west of Farmington, on land first cultivated by his grandfather. When his fields dried up, he lost over 10,000 corn plants, 1,000 squash plants and several acres of alfalfa.

“Corn is local farmers’ bread-and-butter,” he said. “It’s used in a variety of ways, for eating and traditional uses, so it has a high value. It was a catastrophe.” As the reality of their losses, both financial and cultural, began to sink in, “you could see tears in people’s eyes”.

Among those weeping was Bertha Etsitty, a 71-year-old farmer who with her husband, Allen, works about 20 acres near Shiprock. Their fields are fed by the Hogback ditch, and their views are framed by the silhouettes of distant peaks – Ute Mountain in Colorado, the Carrizos in Arizona, and Shiprock itself.

“Our corn was about 4ft tall when they closed the gates,” she said. “I knew we were going to lose it all. We even hauled water in and used cups to pour it for the plants. We saved a little of it, but...” she trailed off, leaving the tragic conclusion unspoken.

Thanks to the closing of the irrigation ditches, “no contamination reached the fields”, said Steve Austin, senior hydrologist with the Navajo Nation EPA. Within about three weeks the level of contaminants in the San Juan had diminished and the water was declared safe to use. Although the Fruitland canal reopened before the end of August, “many farmers didn’t trust it and wouldn’t use it”, Austin said. Irrigators on the Hogback canal voted to keep that ditch closed until the following spring.

When the 2016 harvest came in, farmers had trouble unloading it.

“People were afraid that the water was still contaminated,” said Allen Etsitty, “the way grease stays in the bottom of a pan”.

“We would try to sell our corn at flea markets and fairs, like in Gallup or Window Rock or Kayenta,” Bertha Etsitty elaborated. “But we had to haul most of it, and our melons, back home. A lot of people know I sell corn pollen [about two tablespoons of which go for \$50], and I lost all of those customers. Our bills piled up. We fell behind on our truck payments, tractor payments, and one of our tractors, ‘Old Red,’ is now broken because we couldn’t afford to keep it maintained.”

Mike, who farms 10 miles upriver from the Etsittys, had a similar experience. “The water is ruined – to’ litso – people said in Navajo.” His neighbor, Ernest Benally, who grows alfalfa on 12 acres, says that, even now, some people are still “skeptical of things grown around here. I sell to commercial beef growers, and they wouldn’t buy from me for a couple of years.”

Lawmakers are well aware of the losses that have been suffered. Among them, US congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández says she has written to the DoJ urging it to settle the case and compensate the farmers.

“They should do the right thing,” she said in a phone interview. “I want them to get restitution as quickly as possible, and the fastest way for that to happen is for it to come from the EPA.

“Justice delayed is justice denied,” she said, “and some of the plaintiffs have died since this lawsuit began. They’ll never see justice.”

**Hózhó disrupted**

Alongside a well-earned mistrust of government information, many Navajos evaluated the lasting impact of the mine spill with criteria that went beyond measurable contaminant levels.

“The San Juan is a deity that Navajos revere,” said Karletta Chief, professor of environmental science and director of the Indigenous Resilience Center at the University of Arizona.

Navajo herself, she led research teams that assessed the environmental impact of the spill, communicated their findings to farmers, and tried to understand how the community perceived the risks posed to their health and way of life.

“Their connection to the world, their sense of balance in the world, is related to the river. So when the spill happened, that balance, that *hózhó*, was disrupted. Everything related to the river was also out of balance – it’s a complete system, all interconnected. Because the river was imbalanced, even the corn pollen was disrupted,” she said.

And that could have a negative impact on traditional ceremonies, even if samples showed no significant uptake in arsenic or lead in corn. “You can tell people that the water meets standards for drinking, for irrigating, but for people who are more spiritually connected, when is it OK to use it again?”

### **‘Drastic’ discharges**

The basic facts in the case are not in dispute: The Gold King mine, in the mountains north of Silverton, Colorado, operated on and off between about 1887 and 1922. During that time, it produced over 700,000 tons of gold and silver.

Fast-forward to the 1990s, when the sealing of the nearby Sunnyside mine redirected groundwater into Gold King. Though a cave-in blocked Gold King’s entrance, by the early 2000s, toxic water was leaking out in alarming amounts. It was “a drastic new high-quantity discharge ... of extremely poor quality water, making this site one of the worst draining mines in the State of Colorado,” the state Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety [reported](#). It had to be cleaned up.

In 2015, after a few preliminary efforts, the EPA’s on-scene coordinator, Steve Way, approved a plan to drain the mine, created in consultation with an experienced independent contractor. Similar to an approach that had been successful at a neighboring mine, Gold King would be drilled into from above in order to figure out just how much water it contained, then pumped out in a safe and controlled manner. Only then would workers begin digging into the debris that was plugging the mine entrance, which dammed the water inside. Had this plan been followed, “the blowout would not have occurred,” the US Bureau of Reclamation concluded.

Instead, Way went on vacation. His temporary replacement, Hays Griswold, had no familiarity with Gold King before arriving at the site. Nevertheless, he quickly surveyed the scene and abandoned the work plan, concluding that what needed to be done “was very simple”, according to a sworn deposition. His decisions, which he said were based on a plan that he drew up in his head, directly led to the blowout.

The matter now before the US district court in New Mexico is not whether the EPA was responsible – it admits as much – but whether the Navajo farmers have a right to sue under the Federal Tort Claims Act. The latter allows individuals to sue federal agencies but also grants agencies broad immunities, particularly in situations “when an employee’s acts involve the [exercise of judgment](#) or choice”. The government asserts in court filings that Griswold exercised “just the type of discretionary, policy-based conduct” that is immune from tort claims. It is seeking to have the suit dismissed.

Kate Ferlic, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs, argues that immunity does not apply in this case, pointing out that the government isn’t shielded from lawsuits when employees violate policies that they are bound to follow. “Griswold was reckless and ended up poisoning a river system,” she said. “If immunity is granted under these circumstances, plans designed to protect public safety become meaningless.”

It would cost less for the EPA to compensate the farmers than to keep battling them in court, she said.

"The government has spent more money on this case, in time and experts, than it would have taken to pay out all of the claims."

### **It's 'just wrong'**

Calvin Yazzie, a 71-year-old Navy veteran and former mine worker who lost alfalfa crops valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars following the spill, said, "If you made a mistake and fessed up to it, you don't need to try to swindle people and then smirk when you get away with it. It seems like that's what the government is doing. To me, that's just wrong."

In principle, the EPA appears to agree. The agency says it has aligned with the Biden administration's emphasis on advancing environmental justice for communities, "including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by poverty and inequality". In an April 2021 [memo](#) outlining its environmental justice goals, one bullet point stands out: "Assist and seek to obtain restitution for victims of environmental crimes."

When asked whether the government's posture in the lawsuit contradicted the memo, the EPA replied by email that it is "committed to delivering environmental justice for underserved communities and overburdened communities, including Tribal nations".

As the seventh anniversary of the spill approaches, the farmers are only seeing more delays. On 24 June, the trial date that had been set for early November was vacated and postponed for an indefinite period of time. It has not yet been rescheduled.

"We're just waiting for some good news," said a frustrated Ernest Benally, "but it's going on and on and on".

Standing beside him, Mike agreed. "We feel neglected, not heard, disrespected. We wish they would remember that we have a beating heart, also, and a lot of what it beats on is our farms, no matter how small."

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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 US: China drills are 'significant escalation'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-world-news-china-asia-pacific-93cd119fd932a3206e430ae5f223463d">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-world-news-china-asia-pacific-93cd119fd932a3206e430ae5f223463d</a>
GIST	<p>PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that China's military exercises aimed at Taiwan, including missiles fired into Japan's exclusive economic zone, represent a "significant escalation" and that he has urged Beijing to back down.</p> <p><a href="#">China launched the drills</a> following a visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan that infuriated Beijing, which claims the self-governed island as its own territory.</p> <p>Blinken told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Cambodia, however, that Pelosi's visit was peaceful and did not represent a change in American policy toward Taiwan, accusing China of using it as a "pretext to increase provocative military activity in and around the Taiwan Strait."</p> <p>He said the situation had led to a "vigorous communication" during East Asia Summit meetings in Phnom Penh in which both he and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi took part along with the ASEAN nations, Russia and others.</p> <p>"I reiterated the points that we made publicly as well as directly to Chinese counterparts in recent days, again, about the fact that they should not use the visit as a pretext for war, escalation, for provocative actions, that there is no possible justification for what they've done and urge them to cease these actions," he said.</p>

Blinken did not sit down one-on-one with Wang but said he had spoken with the Chinese foreign minister already about the possibility of a Pelosi visit to Taiwan before it had taken place during meetings in Bali, and had made the U.S. position clear.

China on Friday announced unspecified sanctions on Pelosi for her visit. A Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said she had disregarded China's concerns and resolute opposition to her trip.

Pelosi received a euphoric welcome as the first U.S. House speaker, and highest ranking U.S. official, to visit Taiwan in more than 25 years.

China opposes any engagement by Taiwanese officials with foreign governments, and has accused the U.S. of breaking the status quo with the Pelosi visit. The U.S. insists there has been no change to its "one-China" position of recognizing the government in Beijing, while allowing for informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

Despite the aggressive Chinese reaction to the visit, Blinken said the U.S. would also not change its "commitment to the security of our allies in the region," and that the Defense Department had ordered the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier group "to remain on station in the general area to monitor the situation."

"We will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows," he said. "We'll continue to conduct standard air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait, consistent with our long-standing approach to working with allies and partners to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight."

As the East Asia Summit opened, Wang patted Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the shoulder as he entered the room and gave the already-seated Lavrov a quick wave before taking his own seat. Lavrov waved back in response.

Blinken, who entered the room last, did not even glance at Lavrov as he took his own seat about a half dozen chairs away, or at Wang who was seated farther down the same table as Lavrov.

Ahead of the Phnom Penh talks, the U.S. State Department indicated Blinken had no plans to meet one-on-one with either man during the course of the meetings.

Following the meetings, Lavrov told reporters there had been a lot of "fiery statements" about the aftermath of the Pelosi visit.

"There have been rather sharp statements from our Chinese partners, who we support," he told reporters. "And there have been responses from the U.S. and Japan that it's not China's business and that the declared policy of supporting the one-China principle doesn't mean one has to ask Beijing for permission to visit Taiwan. Surely, it's a weird logic."

The talks came a day after WNBA star Brittney Griner was convicted of drug possession and sentenced to nine years in prison by Russia in a politically charged case amid antagonisms over the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Blinken said the conviction and sentence "compounds the injustice that has been done to her."

"It puts a spotlight on our very significant turn with Russia's legal system and the Russian government's use of wrongful detentions to advance its own agenda using individuals as political pawns," he said.

Blinken has suggested the possibility of a prisoner swap for Griner and another American jailed in Russia, Paul Whelan, but Lavrov told reporters that such a deal could only be decided upon by Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden.



	<p>“We’re ready to discuss this topic, but to discuss it within the channel that was agreed on by presidents Putin and Biden,” Lavrov said on the sidelines of the ASEAN meeting.</p> <p>On Thursday, China canceled a foreign ministers’ meeting with Japan to protest a statement from the Group of Seven industrialized nations that said there was no justification for Beijing’s military exercises, which virtually encircle Taiwan.</p> <p>“Japan, together with other member of the G-7 and the EU, made an irresponsible statement accusing China and confounding right and wrong,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in Beijing.</p> <p>When Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa began to speak Friday at the East Asia Summit, both Lavrov and Wang walked out of the room, according to a diplomat in the room who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss the private session.</p> <p>In the wake of the Chinese missile launches into Japan’s economic zone, Blinken said the U.S. stands in “strong solidarity” with Japan following the “dangerous actions China has taken.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 US world’s biggest monkeypox outbreak</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/repeating-early-covid-mistakes-us-102045764.html">https://news.yahoo.com/repeating-early-covid-mistakes-us-102045764.html</a>
GIST	<p>The story of monkeypox feels to experts frustratingly like a replay of the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.</p> <p>Testing took too long to get launched. Data hasn’t revealed the full extent of the outbreak. The spread wasn’t stopped quickly enough.</p> <p>Monkeypox was supposed to be different, because it is much harder to transmit, treatments and vaccines were already available, much was known about a virus <a href="#">first described in 1958</a>, and so many lessons were supposedly learned from COVID-19.</p> <p>Yet the United States now has the world’s biggest outbreak of monkeypox: More than <a href="#">6,600 Americans have been diagnosed</a> since mid-May. Rarely seen outside Africa before the spring, the virus, a less deadly cousin of smallpox, has now triggered a 26,000-person global emergency, reaching 83 countries, 76 of which had not historically seen the disease.</p> <p>And that’s just the known cases. No one knows the full extent of America’s outbreak.</p> <p>States don’t have to tell the federal government when they have a patient. Testing difficulties have left many people undiagnosed, and communication has been so scattered that many people and physicians don’t consider the virus a possible cause of symptoms such as fever, swollen glands, body aches and a telltale rash.</p> <p>"It's deja vu all over again," said Lawrence Gostin, a university professor and global health law expert at Georgetown University in Washington. "We're really flying in the dark."</p> <p>In recent days and weeks the Biden administration has stepped up its approach to combating monkeypox, he and others said, but it missed key opportunities to stop the spread of a virus that rarely kills but can cause severe pain and scarring.</p> <p>And the window is closing fast to prevent it from becoming a permanent fixture in the United States alongside COVID-19.</p>

"If we don't react more aggressively within the next couple of months – it'll never be the same as coronavirus, but it could mimic the (spread of the) AIDS epidemic pretty closely," said Jared Auclair, an analytical chemist and associate dean at Northeastern University in Boston.

### **Why the monkeypox outbreak got so bad**

Gostin and other public health officials seem both frustrated and surprised that the outbreak has gotten as bad as it has.

"It has been challenging to watch what has happened over the last 2½ months," said Dr. Megan Ranney, an emergency room physician and academic dean of Brown University's School of Public Health in Rhode Island. "I am flummoxed by why we are where we are today."

Ranney pointed to a range of factors that probably contributed to the slow early response, including competing priorities of federal agencies, along with the decentralization of America's public health system with many decisions left to the 50 states, and the sheer exhaustion many public health officials feel after more than two years of battling COVID-19.

Plus, Americans can't expect to have a first-rate public health system if we pay for only a second-rate one, said Dr. Thomas Frieden, a former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"If you fund something at a small fraction of what it needs to get the job done and then you beat it up for not getting the job done, you're not being logical," said Frieden, now president and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative aimed at preventing epidemics and cardiovascular disease. "We have really underfunded public health."

Frieden said he remembers traveling to Africa's Democratic Republic of the Congo when he was CDC director in the early 2010s and hearing from officials who were worried that monkeypox and other infectious diseases eventually would spread across the globe. But there were no resources to combat those diseases, he said.

COVID-19 fatigue also is playing a role in the slow response, Auclair said. Public health officials don't want to be the bad guys again, telling people what they shouldn't do.

But still, there's no excuse for such a slow response, he and the others said.

"Who knows why we're not acting more aggressively, because we should be," Auclair said. "Not only should we have learned from the coronavirus pandemic, but it's like a repeat of HIV/AIDS from the late 1980s."

Monkeypox spreads mostly through close physical contact, such as skin-to-skin touch. Nearly all the cases worldwide have been among men who have sex with men, but viruses don't stay put in one geography or community.

If monkeypox does become endemic, meaning it never fully goes away, it probably will follow the same path as HIV/AIDS did, said Gregg Gonslaves, an HIV/AIDS activist and epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health.

Although striking first in the gay community, in the United States HIV spread to the unhoused, sex workers and other marginalized people. "It's not too far of a leap to say it's going to follow the contours of our social geography again, like it did for HIV," he said.

### **What went wrong with the monkeypox response?**

Testing was the first thing that went wrong early in the spread of COVID-19 and again has been a problem with monkeypox.

Tests for monkeypox initially had to be sent to the CDC for confirmation, drastically limiting the number that could be done. Some people tried for days to be tested, and [others with obvious symptoms tested negative](#), possibly because health care providers aren't used to having to collect samples from skin lesions. Ranney said clinicians still have to get their state department of health to authorize every monkeypox test, which she described as an unnecessary impediment.

Although many people faulted the Trump administration for responding too slowly to COVID-19, it did launch Operation Warp Speed, which led to the development of vaccines in record time.

"When the federal government puts its mind to something, it can get it done," said Gonsalves, adding he has seen nothing with that level of government support or urgency with the monkeypox outbreak. "That's the kind of focus you need, and it doesn't exist."

Two smallpox vaccines were developed years ago and approved for use against monkeypox. The federal government has a large supply of one, ACAM2000, but that vaccine carries severe side effects and risks, so few doses have been administered.

Instead, officials have relied on Jynneos, a vaccine that seems to work well with few problems, though it has never been tried before during an actual monkeypox outbreak.

The government did not immediately order Jynneos doses released. Gonsalves said with frustration that officials apparently were afraid the doses might be needed someday against smallpox instead of recognizing that they were needed immediately against monkeypox.

The government has since ordered more doses, and [more than 1 million have been made available](#), but demand still seems to outstrip supply in many places and more doses won't be available for months, according to the latest schedule from the Biden administration.

There are technologies and ways to speed up and expand the production process, Auclair said, but he hasn't seen them employed. "I haven't seen much evidence that we're even trying to ramp it up," he said.

Similarly, an antiviral treatment called TPOXX that appears to work well against monkeypox has been tied up in bureaucracy and is difficult for patients to access, although the government has begun removing the red tape.

Public education has also fallen short, Auclair said, with messaging that has been confusing. Gay men, who have shown an eagerness to get vaccinated, also would change their behaviors if the messages were clear about what they could do.

"Let's empower people to understand and make appropriate decisions on how they go about their day to reduce risk," he said. "We're not giving them access to the resources they need to take appropriate actions or precautions."

Public health officials shouldn't be telling men not to have sex, Frieden said, but encouraging fewer partners until more vaccine becomes available.

The tools for fighting monkeypox are there, Gonsalves said. But instead of getting them to the public immediately, "we kept them in the garage," he said. "That's the most depressing thing about all of this."

### **What can be done about monkeypox in the US?**

The Biden administration announced this week the establishment of a [National Monkeypox Response Team](#) with both logistical and public health experience. The team's new leadership, along with CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky and her boss, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, were expected to hold a news conference Thursday to discuss their latest efforts.

	<p>Ranney and Gostin praised the appointments and expressed hope that the team's creation would mark a turning point in the outbreak.</p> <p>Gonsalves had a more bleak response. "The fire department is getting organized 2½ months after the fire has started," he said.</p> <p>The administration has not made public health enough of a priority, Gonsalves said, charging that officials have alternated between saying there's no problem and blaming the CDC.</p> <p>Gonsalves said he's worried what will happen over Labor Day, when Black Gay Pride is celebrated in Atlanta. If action isn't taken quickly to avert a superspreader event, "you might expect to see the virus seed itself across the rural South," he said.</p> <p>"It's horrible to think of a new endemic virus sinking its roots into the United States."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 Russia: ready to discuss prisoner swap</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/05/europe/griner-russia-prisoner-swap-lavrov-intl-hnk/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/05/europe/griner-russia-prisoner-swap-lavrov-intl-hnk/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)Russia is ready to discuss an exchange of prisoners with the United States through a diplomatic channel agreed upon by both countries, Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said Friday, state news agency RIA Novosti reported.</p> <p>"On the matter of persons who are convicted in Russia and in the United States ... there is a specified channel that has been agreed upon by [Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden], and no matter what anyone says publicly, this channel will remain in effect," Lavrov reportedly said at a news conference in Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh on Friday.</p> <p>"We are ready to discuss this topic, but within the framework of the channel that has been agreed by the presidents," Lavrov added.</p> <p>His comments come one day after American women's basketball star <a href="#">Brittney Griner</a> was convicted of deliberately smuggling drugs into Russia and sentenced to nine years of jail time, in a case that has raised concerns she is being used as a political pawn in Russia's war against Ukraine.</p> <p>During the trial, Griner pleaded guilty to carrying less than 1 gram of cannabis oil in her luggage as she traveled through a Moscow airport on February 17. She testified in court that she was aware of Russia's strict drug laws and had no intention of bringing cannabis into the country, saying she was in a rush and "stress packing."</p> <p>Prior to the verdict, Griner apologized to the court and asked for leniency in an emotional speech.</p> <p>"I never meant to hurt anybody, I never meant to put in jeopardy the Russian population, I never meant to break any laws here," Griner said.</p> <p>"I made an honest mistake and I hope that in your ruling that it doesn't end my life here. I know everybody keeps talking about political pawn and politics, but I hope that, that is far from this courtroom."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 Fentanyl overdose deaths climb</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/fentanyl-overdose-deaths-claiming-thousands-american-lives-what-behind-rise">https://www.foxnews.com/us/fentanyl-overdose-deaths-claiming-thousands-american-lives-what-behind-rise</a>
GIST	Nearly one million people have died of <a href="#">drug overdose deaths</a> in the past two decades, but a growing majority of those deaths in recent years have involved dangerous synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. First synthesized by [Belgian chemist](#) Paul Janssen as a painkiller in 1960, it proved to be a useful drug to help patients with traumatic injuries.

But it wasn't until roughly the past decade that the drug made its way onto the black market and truly began destroying lives and communities across the U.S.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) estimates that more than 108,000 people in the U.S. died of drug overdoses between February 2021 and February 2022. Of those, more than 70% involved fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

One of the main drivers of fentanyl's proliferation in recent years is cheaper production methods.

Whereas other plant-derived [drugs like heroin and cocaine](#) need to be grown and cultivated, synthesized drugs like fentanyl are cheaper – both for producers and consumers.

"The production of (heroin) is expensive and time-consuming because you have to use the actual poppy from poppy fields. With fentanyl being a synthetic drug, you eliminate that process, and it's much more lucrative," a Los Angeles Police officer and drug recognition expert told Fox News Digital. "A legitimate 40-milligram OxyContin pill will be around \$40 bucks. You can get these illicit pills, like the M-30s, for \$10 or \$15 bucks each."

The expert asked to remain anonymous because the expert was not authorized to speak with the media.

The officer, who has been on the force around two decades, has seen the drug affect rich and poor.

"I feel like fentanyl touches everyone. Because you have your different forms," the officer said. "You have people that are just using it in the powder form – they're smoking it off of foil – your transients in Skid Row. And then you have your big-name celebrities like (rapper) [Mac Miller](#) or (MLB player) Tyler Scaggs, who have more than enough money to buy whatever drugs they want, but they're ... unknowingly overdosing on fentanyl."

Investigative journalist and author Ben Westhoff, who chronicled the rise of the fentanyl epidemic in his book, "[Fentanyl, Inc.](#)," said it wasn't until dealers really realized they could make so much more money by cutting other drugs with fentanyl that it became sort of a supply-driven phenomenon."

"Nobody saw it coming. Partly it was that production methods got simpler. There was a new production method that was discovered," Westhoff said.

Westhoff traces the modern crisis back to 2005, when U.S. lawmakers were cracking down on methamphetamine in the U.S. The U.S. Senate banned over-the-counter sales of cold medicines that contained pseudoephedrine, which is commonly used to make methamphetamine.

Subsequently, many of the backwoods meth labs scattered throughout the U.S. moved to Mexico. These labs, Westhoff said, evolved into "super labs" that received precursor ingredients directly from China, a relationship that continues today.

Now, [chemicals used to make fentanyl](#) are almost entirely sold to Mexican drug cartels from China. The cartels then package the fentanyl into other drugs like Xanax and Adderall, and ship them to the U.S. to be sold on the black market. Consequently, most Americans who die of fentanyl-related overdose deaths aren't even aware they're consuming it.

One of those many victims was Thomas Olrik Jr., who died of a fentanyl-related overdose at the age of 28. His mother, Mary Pratt-Weiss, told Fox News Digital her son had struggled with addiction in the past but was starting to get his life back on track and was enrolled in a rehab program.

"He started sharing and leading Heroin Anonymous meetings. He was helping a lot of people get sober. He was really an icon in the community. Everybody knew him, everywhere he went. He just always lit up a room," Pratt-Weiss said.

Olrik was also a talented artist and was doing well financially, selling his artwork at festivals.

"He would do these huge murals while [bands would be playing](#). And people would watch him perform painting," Pratt-Weiss said.

Things took a toll, however, with the onslaught of [the COVID-19 pandemic](#), and Olrik, who was prone to anxiety and panic attacks, took a turn for the worse. He died of an overdose July 19, 2021. Olrik's autopsy report revealed he had Klonopin, a highly addictive drug used to treat panic attacks, and fentanyl in his system.

"The fact that Klonopin and fentanyl was in his system tells me that he was stressed, and he probably just wanted to have a little something calm him down," Pratt-Weiss said. "But I highly doubt he would have taken enough to OD if he knew what was in it."

Olrik's story could have happened to anybody. That is why Pratt-Weiss, who is now on a mission to educate the public about the dangers of fentanyl, says the drug recognizes no race, class or gender.

"I have a friend now whose daughter is addicted to fentanyl, and she's gone through literally hell trying to get her into a rehab facility," Pratt-Weiss said. "My neighbor behind me that just bought the house, they just lost a twin daughter to fentanyl in October last year."

Still, it is highly unlikely that the U.S. can [stop fentanyl completely](#) from coming into the country. All sources who spoke to Fox News Digital on the topic said there aren't enough resources being devoted to the problem. In some cases, local authorities are even moving backward in terms of funding.

"I definitely think we're falling way short. We need to be treating it like COVID, an all-hands-on-deck situation," Westhoff said.

Despite a lack of resources, both Westhoff and Pratt-Weiss agreed that educating the public can go a long way in combating this problem.

"Education is key. People need to be talking to their kids. They need to be telling them not to try anything. They need to be scrutinizing texts of their children under 18 (and) educating them in the sense that these things, even antidepressants, can be laced," Pratt-Weiss said. "Everyone, sooner or later, will have [somebody they know](#) that's been affected. I believed it's super important right now for people to be educated."

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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	08/04 Cyber Front Z: pro-Russia troll operation
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/cyber-front-z-russia-trolls-meta/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/cyber-front-z-russia-trolls-meta/</a>
GIST	<p>Cyber Front Z, a pro-Russian troll operation exposed in the days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, "was clumsy and largely ineffective — definitely not 'A team' work," security officials with Meta said Thursday.</p> <p>In an analysis included in the <a href="#">company's quarterly adversarial threat report</a>, Meta officials described the group as a "poorly executed attempt, publicly coordinated via a Telegram channel, to create a perception of grassroots online support for Russia's invasion by using fake accounts to post pro-Russia comments on content by influencers and media."</p>



The company detected the group's activities on its platform in March after the St. Petersburg-based [Fontanka media outlet exposed the group](#) just 10 days after it was soliciting recruits online. Altogether, Meta officials said, the company took down 45 Facebook accounts and 1,037 Instagram accounts associated with Cyber Front Z.

The quarterly report also detailed the company's efforts at disrupting various nontraditional networks, such as mass-reporting networks and brigading networks (groups of accounts harnessed to harass or abuse a target). It also highlighted the recent disruption of about tens of thousands of accounts spread across multiple clusters around the recent Philippine presidential elections, and the fact that the groups behind this kind of activity are [increasingly relying on publicly available tools](#), making it both easier and harder to attribute.

Cyber Front Z remains active on Telegram, with 110,692 subscribers as of Aug. 4. Among the many posts Thursday was a note praising an [Amnesty International report](#) that criticizes Ukrainian military tactics, along with "memes from the Ministry of Defense for distribution," according to a Google translation. Group administrators have said it's simply a vehicle to counter Ukrainian and western narratives as part of any good Russian citizen's patriotic duty, [Vice reported in April](#).

Ben Nimmo, Meta's Global Threat Intelligence Lead, told reporters Thursday that the original Fontanka story on the group did not include Meta accounts, such as Facebook or Instagram. But once the company began investigating its investigators found the Cyber Front Z accounts on Instagram and links to people who'd been associated with the Internet Research Agency, a Russian organization [frequently tied](#) to inauthentic social media accounts in the past.

The accounts were "low in sophistication, represented no distinct personas and were essentially fungible," the company wrote in its analysis. "A large portion of them were detected and disabled by automation even before we found their link to this activity."

The company took them down in early April, Nimmo said, and "we've continued to detect and disable their attempts to come back." The time to detection and removal is key, he said, noting that prior IRA coordinated trolling efforts stretched back to [2013 and were not removed until 2017](#).

"The time span has shrunk from years to weeks," he said.

The group's tactics had evolved beyond other previous IRA-linked operations, the company said. Whereas in the past the idea was to create legions of phony accounts, this operation created a smaller number of credible fake accounts that existed across multiple platforms, "and tried to co-opt unwitting journalists by recruiting them to work for non-existent NGOs or news outlets."

In some cases, the accounts copied and pasted pro-Ukraine comments "from the very groups [Cyber Front Z] explicitly opposed," the report reads. "This might be a case of individual operators undermining this fictitious movement from within."

Ultimately the group seemingly isn't that successful, the report concludes, noting that it appeared to fake engagement on the back end, perhaps to convince their funders or employers.

"Some influence operations try to capitalize on public fear of influence operations by falsely claiming they were successful," Nimmo said Thursday. "Taking them at face value would mean they're believing they're effective when they're not."

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HEADLINE	08/05 Coinbase phishing: more crypto attacks?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/coinbase-phishing-hack-signals-more-crypto-attacks-to-come-says-security-firm">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/coinbase-phishing-hack-signals-more-crypto-attacks-to-come-says-security-firm</a>

Recent phishing attacks on Coinbase and its customers revealed how these campaigns are not only becoming more sophisticated and multi-faceted, but how [threats to cryptocurrency sites](#) are on the rapid rise, according to research and analysis from security firm PIXM.

"Since its rise to prominence, [Coinbase] has been increasingly targeted by scammers, fraudsters, and cyber criminals, due in part to the fact that its user-base is so large and mainstream," said the PIXM blog posted earlier Aug. 4, "it is assumed to cover an audience of casual, generally non-technical, crypto investors." Coinbase is "arguably the most mainstream cryptocurrency exchange used globally," having added more than 89 million users to its platform since it began business a decade ago in 2012.

In their "multi-layered" [phishing attacks](#) on Coinbase, cybercriminals sent out spoofed emails purporting to come from the cryptocurrency company in order to steal financial and personal data to resell and log into users' legitimate accounts to steal their funds in real-time. The attacks combined email and brand impersonations to steal from Coinbase wallet-holders, despite their use of multi-factor authentication (MFA), according to PIXM's analysis.

According to Chris Cleveland, founder and CEO of PIXM, this complex and sophisticated campaign involved "surprising tactics to steal much more than just passwords."

"After stealing a user's Coinbase password, the phishing sites used a built in two-factor relay system to enter the user's password into the real Coinbase site and then further solicit the actual two-factor authentication code from the user, [which] allowed the hacker to bypass two-factor authentication and access a user's Coinbase wallet."

Bad actors typically sent Coinbase customers a notification that their account "needed attention due to an urgent matter," such as being "locked" or requiring a transaction confirmation. "Users were prompted to enter login credentials and a two-factor authentication code into the fake website," according to PIXM's blog. "With the newly obtained personal information, the attacker immediately gain[ed] access into users' legitimate sessions on the Coinbase website."

"The email prompts the user to log in for a variety of reasons, each with a sense of urgency. It is either to confirm a transaction, or that the user's account has been 'locked' due to suspicious activity," the PIXM blog continued. "The use of these scenarios by the attacker are designed to distract the user from analyzing the specifics of the email, [such as] if the sender is legitimate or if the login link is legitimate."

Roger Grimes, data-driven defense evangelist at [KnowBe4](#), pointed out that it's increasingly common for attackers to use short-lived domains, usually customized to the potential victims, "to complicate the task of integrity checkers and blocklists."

"By the time the various defending software companies try to check out the site, it's gone, and been gone for hours," he added.

Adding insult to injury, after stealing user passwords and authentication code, the phishing sites would lead to a "suspended account" page with a support chat box asking for additional personal information to recover the account, Cleveland pointed out.

"Impersonating Coinbase customer support, the hackers would continue to steal a range of additional personal information, including phone number, address, email and estimated account balance," Cleveland added. "This allowed them to bypass any additional account validation and also keep victims engaged and distracted while draining their funds."

As [the embrace of cryptocurrency](#) has exploded, so have attacks on these sites. Worldwide crypto adoption jumped more than [880% last year](#), according to Cleveland, with the global use of Bitcoin alone projected to [hit 10% by 2030](#). This makes unsuspecting crypto investors using online exchanges a massive growth opportunity and ideal phishing targets over the coming years.

	“Cryptocurrency exchanges have been the target of sophisticated adversaries since their inception,” according to the PIXM, which has been tracking these attacks since last year. “The attacks we’ve detected ... which are targeting the exchange user bases via phishing, have evolved and are using increasingly sophisticated techniques to compromise crypto exchange users’ accounts and drain their wallets.”
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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 China info ops campaign link to PR firm</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/chinese-info-ops-campaign-tied-to/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/chinese-info-ops-campaign-tied-to/</a>
GIST	<p>Security researchers have uncovered another Chinese information operation using scores of inauthentic news sites and social media assets in an attempt to burnish the country’s image abroad.</p> <p>Published in 11 languages, the content aims to win over hearts and minds to Beijing’s way of thinking, by discrediting criticism of the genocide in Xinjiang and erosion of democracy in Hong Kong, among other things.</p> <p>Among the Communist Party critics targeted in the campaign are Chinese businessman Guo Wengui and German anthropologist Adrian Zenz, who is noted for his research on the persecution of Uyghurs, according to Mandiant.</p> <p>However, perhaps the most notable thing about the campaign is that it appears to use infrastructure owned by local PR firm Shanghai Haixun Technology, a company that advertises “positive energy packages” for clients.</p> <p>As Mandiant explains <a href="#">in a blog post</a>, the term “positive energy” (正能量) is particularly loaded in China as it’s one used often by the Xi Jinping administration to refer to messages which portray Beijing in a positive light.</p> <p>As a result, Mandiant named the info ops campaign “HaiEnergy.”</p> <p>“While we do not currently have sufficient evidence to determine the extent to which Haixun is involved in, or even aware of HaiEnergy, our analysis indicates that the campaign has at least leveraged services and infrastructure belonging to Haixun to host and distribute content,” the firm explained.</p> <p>“In total, we identified 72 websites (59 domains and 14 subdomains) hosted by Haixun, which were used to target audiences in North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.”</p> <p>The campaign has exclusively used Haixun’s internet infrastructure to publish content and host websites, In fact, those sites also bear several similarities which suggest a coordinated approach, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly all of the English language sites are built with a Chinese-language HTML template</li> <li>• Several of the sites that include a domain and subdomain are disguised to appear as different, independent sites</li> <li>• Many of the sites link directly to other sites in the network</li> <li>• The same articles are often published across multiple sites</li> </ul> <p>If Haixun is playing an active role in this campaign, it would represent the continuation of a trend for threat actors to use “info ops for hire” firms to do their dirty work, Mandiant claimed. The one positive is that on this occasion it does not appear to have paid off.</p> <p>“We note that despite the capabilities and global reach advertised by Haixun, there is at least some evidence to suggest HaiEnergy failed to generate substantial engagement,” the report concluded.</p> <p>“Most notably, despite a significantly large number of followers, the political posts promoted by inauthentic accounts we attribute to this campaign failed to gain much traction outside of the campaign itself.”</p>

HEADLINE	<b>08/05 UK as Europe's 'capital of card fraud'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/uk-branded-europes-capital-of-card/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/uk-branded-europes-capital-of-card/</a>
GIST	<p>UK consumers are more likely to be hit by card fraud and suffer higher losses than their European counterparts, according to new data shared by the Social Market Foundation (SMF).</p> <p>The London-based think tank analyzed data from the European Central Bank to reveal that in the UK, the rate of fraud is 134 cases per 1000 people, or around 13%. That's far higher than second placed France (115) and Spain (37) in third.</p> <p>Worse still, the cost of fraud per 1000 people is £8833 in the UK, versus only £6069 in France and £2377 in Spain.</p> <p>Although <a href="#">the figures</a> come from 2019, the trends are unlikely to have shifted much since.</p> <p>A <a href="#">report last year</a> claimed that e-commerce fraud in the UK rose by 179% from 2010 to 2020, with an estimated £8909 lost per 1000 victims.</p> <p>The issue was highlighted in a <a href="#">report from the highly respected Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) think tank</a> last year, which branded fraud a serious threat to the UK's national security and called for a "major systemic shift" in government strategy.</p> <p>"Britain's shocking record on card fraud compared to major European economies is yet another reminder of how UK law enforcement has failed to keep up with the epidemic. Policymakers need to reflect further on why we're at this stage," argued SMF senior researcher, Richard Hyde.</p> <p>"Solving the crisis will take more than just increased police staff. Whilst specialist staff will certainly play a crucial role, the entire fraud law enforcement landscape needs an overhaul – with reforms that will transform the system and enact lasting change."</p> <p>Mark Crichton, head of product at fraud prevention firm <a href="#">Outseer</a>, argued that banks should also invest in the right AI-powered solutions to spot and stop fraudulent transactions.</p> <p>"Also, as consumers, we should all take a pause when being asked to make a payment to a new account, we should verify the source of the request and be as confident as we can that the request is genuine," he added.</p> <p>"Whilst government and banks need to ensure they play their part – including education and awareness – the convenience of immediate payments also requires more diligence on behalf of the consumer."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 'Dark Utilities' C2-as-a-Service</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/thousands-of-hackers-flock-to-dark-utilities-c2-as-a-service/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/thousands-of-hackers-flock-to-dark-utilities-c2-as-a-service/</a>
GIST	<p>Security researchers found a new service called Dark Utilities that provides an easy and inexpensive way for cybercriminals to set up a command and control (C2) center for their malicious operations.</p> <p>The Dark Utilities service provides threat actors a platform that supports Windows, Linux, and Python-based payloads, and eliminates the effort associated with implementing a C2 communication channel.</p> <p>A C2 server is how adversaries control their malware in the wild, sending out commands, configurations and new payloads, and receiving data collected from compromised systems.</p>

The Dark Utilities operation is a 'C2-as-a-service' (C2aaS) that advertises reliable, anonymous C2 infrastructure and all the required additional functions for a starting price of just EUR 9,99.

A [report from Cisco Talos](#) says that the service has around 3,000 active subscribers, which would bring the operators a revenue of about EUR 30,000.

Dark Utilities emerged in early 2022 and offers full-blown C2 capabilities both on the Tor network and on the clear web. It hosts payloads in the Interplanetary File System ([IPFS](#)) - a decentralized network system for storing and sharing data.

Multiple architectures are supported and it appears that the operators are planning on expanding the list to provide a larger set of options of devices that could be targeted.

Cisco Talos researchers say that selecting an operating system generates a command string that "threat actors are typically embedding into PowerShell or Bash scripts to facilitate the retrieval and execution of the payload on victim machines."

The selected payload also establishes persistence on the target system by creating a Registry key on Windows, or a Crontab entry or a Systemd service on Linux.

According to the researchers, the administrative panel comes with multiple modules for various types of attack, including distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) and cryptojacking.

With tens of thousands of threat actors already subscribed and the low price, Dark Utilities is likely to attract an even larger crowd of less-skilled adversaries.

Cisco Talos has compiled [indicators of compromise for Dark Utilities](#) that could help companies defend against malware using this platform.

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HEADLINE	08/04 Online survey firm suffers extortion attempt
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-try-to-extort-survey-firm-questionpro-after-alleged-data-theft/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-try-to-extort-survey-firm-questionpro-after-alleged-data-theft/</a>
GIST	<p>Hackers attempted to extort the online survey platform QuestionPro after claiming to have stolen the company's database containing respondents' personal information.</p> <p>QuestionPro is an online service allowing businesses to create and conduct surveys to perform market research.</p> <p>The company told BleepingComputer that they are currently determining whether a data breach occurred and have engaged with law enforcement to investigate the incident.</p> <p>However, the company did confirm that they suffered an extortion attempt, which was ignored, where a threat actor demanded a bitcoin payment not to release the data.</p> <p>QuestionPro said that customers will be alerted of a data theft incident if it is determined that a data breach occurred.</p> <p><b>Database contains 22 million unique emails</b></p> <p>BleepingComputer learned of this incident last week from Troy Hunt, the owner of the <a href="#">Have I Been Pwned</a> data breach notification service, after being contacted by a threat actor known as 'pompompurin,' who claimed to have stolen QuestionPro's database.</p>

The threat actor has been involved in other high-profile breaches, including sending fake cyberattack emails through the [FBI's Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal](#) (LEEP) and [stealing customer data from Robinhood](#).

Pompompurin initially told BleepingComputer that they downloaded the database on May 21st and reported the unsecured database on May 23rd but did not demand a ransom. However, it was revealed later that another threat actor involved in the incident attempted to extort QuestionPro.

Hunt, who examined the allegedly stolen database, said it contains records for approximately 22 million unique email addresses.

While it is impossible to verify the database's authenticity, Hunt says that it contains hundreds of thousands of entries using @questionpro.com email addresses, indicating that the data is likely affiliated with the service.

The data records shared with Have I Been Pwned include email addresses, IP addresses, geographic locations, and other survey-related information.

#### **Listed on HIBP as "unverified"**

Hunt said that he would add the data as an "unverified" breach to the HIBP, where users can check to see if their email address was exposed in the database.

"My commitment to subscribers is to let them know if I find their data in a breach and right now, verified or not, I'm sitting on their data and would like to notify them," Hunt told BleepingComputer.

If you are a subscriber to Have I Been Pwned notification service, and your email is listed in the database, you will automatically be notified.

For those who have not signed up for email notifications, you can visit the site and enter your email address to check what data breaches your information has been exposed.

While the data breach has not been confirmed, if you have used QuestionPro in the past, you should err on the side of caution and be on the lookout for targeted phishing emails.

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HEADLINE	08/04 New Traffic Light Protocol 2.0
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-traffic-light-protocol-standard-released-after-five-years/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-traffic-light-protocol-standard-released-after-five-years/</a>
GIST	<p>The Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST) has published TLP 2.0, a new version of its Traffic Light Protocol (TLP) standard, five years after the release of the initial version.</p> <p>The <a href="#">TLP standard</a> is used in the computer security incident response team (CSIRT) community to facilitate the greater sharing of sensitive information.</p> <p>It also indicates any sharing limitations recipients have to consider when communicating potentially sensitive info with others.</p> <p>"TLP provides a simple and intuitive schema for indicating with whom potentially sensitive information can be shared," FIRST says.</p> <p>"TLP labels and their definitions are not intended to have any effect on freedom of information or 'sunshine' laws in any jurisdiction."</p> <p>In the new standard, FIRST maintains the rule that the source of information should communicate the TLP label in writing or verbally, depending on the TLP designation.</p>



Information sources are also required to ensure that recipients of TLP-labeled info understand and abide by the TLP sharing guidance.

### Changes in the new TLP 2.0 standard

Compared to TLP 1.0, TLP 2.0 replaces the TLP:WHITE label with TLP:CLEAR and adds an additional TLP: AMBER+STRICT label to add an extra limited disclosure level within organizations.

The new standard also clarifies the previous label description to improve human readability and make it easier to understand disclosure limitations.

According to FIRST, the color-coded TLP labels should be applied based on the audience that should have access to the shared sensitive information:

- **TLP:RED** = For the eyes and ears of *individual* recipients only, no further disclosure.
- **TLP:AMBER** = Limited disclosure, recipients can only spread this on a need-to-know basis within their *organization* and its *clients*.
- **TLP:AMBER+STRICT** restricts sharing to the *organization* only.
- **TLP:GREEN** = Limited disclosure, recipients can spread this within their community.
- **TLP:CLEAR** = Recipients can spread this to the *world*, there is no limit on disclosure.

When applying these TLP labels, those sharing the information should consider the foreseeable risk of its misuse, if it should be used to increase awareness in the broader community, and its impact on organization privacy, reputation, or operations.

"If a recipient needs to share information more widely than indicated by the TLP label it came with, they must obtain explicit permission from the source," FIRST [explained](#).

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HEADLINE	08/04 DHS: critical flaws in EAS devices
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/dhs-warns-of-critical-flaws-in-emergency-alert-system-devices/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/dhs-warns-of-critical-flaws-in-emergency-alert-system-devices/</a>
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) warned that attackers could exploit critical security vulnerabilities in unpatched Emergency Alert System (EAS) encoder/decoder devices to send fake emergency alerts via TV and radio networks.</p> <p>The warning was issued by DHS' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as an advisory delivered through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).</p> <p>"We recently became aware of certain vulnerabilities in EAS encoder/decoder devices that, if not updated to most recent software versions, could allow an actor to issue EAS alerts over the host infrastructure (TV, radio, cable network)," the DHS agency <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>"This exploit was successfully demonstrated by Ken Pyle, a security researcher at CYBIR.com, and may be presented as a proof of concept at the upcoming DEFCON 2022 conference in Las Vegas, August 11-14.</p> <p>"In short, the vulnerability is public knowledge and will be demonstrated to a large audience in the coming weeks."</p> <p>FEMA also urged all participants in the EAS system to adequately mitigate this flaw by ensuring that their EAS devices are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• up to date with the most recent software versions and security patches;</li><li>• protected by a firewall;</li><li>• monitored and audit logs are regularly reviewed looking for unauthorized access.</li></ul>

## Multiple flaws and issues in Monroe Electronics devices

BleepingComputer also spoke with Ken Pyle, the Cybir researcher who discovered this critical issue in the [Monroe Electronics R189 One-Net DASDEC EAS device](#).

He told BleepingComputer that multiple vulnerabilities and issues (confirmed by other researchers) haven't been patched for several years and snowballed into a huge flaw.

When asked what can be done after successful exploitation, Pyle said: "I can easily obtain access to the credentials, certs, devices, exploit the web server, send fake alerts via crafts message, have them valid / pre-empting signals at will. I can also lock legitimate users out when I do, neutralizing or disabling a response."

Pyle also explained the lack of info regarding this issue, saying that the main concern is to mitigate the problem before releasing more details.

"Public safety and cybersecurity are more important than social media likes and sensationalism. I do the right thing regardless of whether people are looking or not," Pyle added.

Almost a decade ago, Monroe Electronics (now doing business as [Digital Alert Systems](#)) patched a maximum severity vulnerability impacting the same EAS device (tracked as [CVE-2013-4735](#)).

If left unpatched, remote attackers can exploit it to gain root access and spoof alerts via an SSH session by taking advantage of a shared private root SSH key exposed in publicly available firmware images.

Pyle will share further information on these vulnerabilities in [an IoT Village talk at DEF CON 30](#), on August 13, between 10 AM and 02 PM.

### What is the Emergency Alert System?

[EAS](#) is a U.S. national public warning system that allows the president or state and local authorities to deliver critical information in case of federal or local emergency (e.g., weather info, imminent threats, or AMBER alerts) and when all other means of alerting the public are unavailable.

This system can also be used to send national-level alerts provided that the President considers it necessary that the messages should have a nationwide reach.

EAS alerts are delivered via IPAWS through multiple communication channels simultaneously, including AM, FM, and satellite radio, as well as broadcast, cable, and satellite TV, to reach as many people as possible.

They can also interrupt radio and television programming to broadcast emergency alert information and can be delivered as text messages with or without audio attachments.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 New Iran aggression on Albania?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/iran-cyberattack-albania/">https://www.wired.com/story/iran-cyberattack-albania/</a>
GIST	<p><b>IN MID-JULY</b>, A cyberattack on the Albanian government knocked out state websites and public services for hours. With Russia's war raging in Ukraine, the Kremlin might seem like the likeliest suspect. But <a href="#">research</a> published on Thursday by the threat intelligence firm Mandiant attributes the attack to Iran. And while Tehran's espionage operations and digital meddling have shown up all over the world, Mandiant researchers say that a disruptive attack from Iran on a NATO member is a noteworthy escalation.</p> <p>The digital attacks targeting Albania on July 17 came ahead of the "World Summit of Free Iran," a conference scheduled to convene in the town of Manëz in western Albania on July 23 and 24. The summit was affiliated with the Iranian opposition group Mujahideen-e-Khalq, or the People's Mojahedin</p>

Organization of Iran (often abbreviated MEK, PMOI, or MKO). The conference was [postponed](#) the day before it was set to begin because of reported, unspecified “terrorist” threats.

Mandiant researchers say that attackers deployed ransomware from the RoadswEEP family and may have also utilized a previously unknown backdoor, dubbed Chimneysweep, as well as a new strain of the Zeroclear wiper. Past use of similar malware, the timing of the attacks, other clues from the RoadswEEP ransomware note, and activity from actors claiming responsibility for the attacks on Telegram all point to Iran, Mandiant says.

“This is an aggressive escalatory step that we have to recognize,” says John Hultquist, Mandiant’s vice president of intelligence. “Iranian espionage happens all the time all over the world. The difference here is this isn’t espionage. These are disruptive attacks, which affect the lives of everyday Albanians who live within the NATO alliance. And it was essentially a coercive attack to force the hand of the government.”

Iran has conducted aggressive hacking campaigns in the Middle East and particularly in Israel, and its state-backed hackers have penetrated and probed manufacturing, supply, and critical infrastructure organizations. In November 2021, the US and Australian governments [warned](#) that Iranian hackers were actively working to gain access to an array of networks related to transportation, health care, and public health entities, among others. “These Iranian government-sponsored APT actors can leverage this access for follow-on operations, such as data exfiltration or encryption, ransomware, and extortion,” the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency wrote at the time.

Tehran has limited how far its attacks have gone, though, largely keeping to data exfiltration and reconnaissance on the global stage. The country has, however, participated in influence operations, disinformation campaigns, and efforts to meddle in foreign elections, including targeting the US.

“We’ve become used to seeing Iran being aggressive in the Middle East where that activity just has never stopped, but outside of the Middle East they’ve been far more restrained,” Hultquist says. “I’m concerned that they may be more willing to leverage their capability outside of the region. And they clearly have no qualms about targeting NATO states, which suggests to me that whatever deterrents we believe exist between us and them may not exist at all.”

With Iran [claiming](#) that it now has the ability to produce nuclear warheads, and representatives from the country [meeting](#) with US officials in Vienna about a possible revival of the 2015 nuclear deal between the countries, any signal about Iran’s possible intentions and risk tolerance when it comes to dealing with NATO are significant.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 New form social media vigilantism emerges</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/style/monkeypox-tiktok.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/style/monkeypox-tiktok.html</a>
GIST	<p>Lilly Simon, a 33-year-old in Brooklyn, does not have monkeypox. She does have neurofibromatosis type 1, a genetic condition that causes tumors to grow at her nerve endings. Those tumors were filmed surreptitiously by a TikTok user while Ms. Simon was riding the subway on a Thursday in late July during her commute.</p> <p>In the video, Ms. Simon is sitting on the train wearing shorts, a T-shirt and a leaf-patterned mask. She is looking at her cellphone, unaware she is being recorded.</p> <p>The video was later posted to TikTok with a monkey emoji and a question mark laid on top, appearing to indicate Ms. Simon might be riding the subway with an active case of monkeypox, the virus recently declared a <a href="#">global health emergency</a> by the World Health Organization.</p> <p>A few days later, Ms. Simon’s sister called her. She had seen the video. “Some of her friends had reached out to her,” Ms. Simon said. She said the news hit her “like a pile of bricks.”</p>

“I’m not new to people being mean to the condition,” said Ms. Simon, who is a project manager and who used to work for the School of The New York Times, an educational program that is part of The New York Times Company. “I’ve had it since I was a child.” She said that with the recent spike in monkeypox cases, she’d thought something like this was “inevitable.”

One of the [common symptoms of monkeypox](#) is a painful rash that turns into raised pustules that eventually scab over and fall off as the virus runs its course. While most people who contract the virus will develop pustules, [experts say](#) there may only be a single lesion or the pustules will be localized to a person’s genitals.

In the TikTok video, the person recording zooms in on Ms. Simon’s arms, legs and ankles, where her small tumors appear as raised bumps on her skin. As a child, Ms. Simon said she was called a “leper” and her elementary school classmates would joke about her having smallpox.

She initially weighed whether or not to respond. “My heart dropped and all of a sudden I had to decide,” Ms. Simon said. “Do I fight it? There’s no hiding that it’s me. Or do I, like, how should I respond to it?”

Ultimately, she [decided to stitch her response to the initial video](#). (On TikTok, to stitch a video means to add your new video to an existing clip on the app. In this case, viewers can see a few seconds of the original subway video before Ms. Simon appears onscreen and tells the whole story.)

“I wouldn’t let something like that go,” Ms. Simon said of her choice. “I can’t look like a coward, and I’d rather stand up for myself than just let it pass.”

“The tumors are benign, but they are still all over my skin and give me a lot of health complications, both physical and mental,” Ms. Simon says in her video. Speaking with The New York Times, Ms. Simon added that she was diagnosed at the age of 8, has undergone multiple surgeries and has tumors growing in her brain and eyes. There currently is no cure for neurofibromatosis type 1. It is not contagious.

Ms. Simon said those complications also include scoliosis, which she was able to get “under control” through activities like yoga, sports and stretching, and several tumors growing inside her ears, which affect her hearing.

The tumors can be itchy and painful, and she often needs regular visits to her doctors. “Dealing with the general public with it has caused some sort of anxiety and depression and a little PTSD, and this situation definitely didn’t help,” Ms. Simon said, noting that she has “very much a mild version” and is in the “early stages” of the condition.

“I will not let any of y’all reverse any years of therapy and healing that I had to endure to deal with the condition and, of course, to exist around people like you,” she says in her TikTok. Ms. Simon said she chose to use “buzzwords” to make her plight relatable. “I knew people would resonate with it no matter what they’re going through,” she said.

Her response video has been viewed over one million times on TikTok. The original TikTok video has since been removed, but not before it had amassed a significant number of views. (It is unclear if the original video was removed by TikTok or by the original poster.)

Social media platforms like TikTok are something of a Hydra. Cut off one head and three more grow back. Or, in this case, delete one video and multiple reposted versions will appear in its stead.

Before its removal, the original video initially had commenting turned on, meaning anyone with a TikTok account could weigh in on the video. The comments, Ms. Simon said, ranged from genuine concern to threats of physical violence against her. TikTok did not respond to a request for comment for this article.

It is legal to record videos like the one of Ms. Simon, said Mickey Osterreicher, the general counsel for the National Press Photographers Association. “When you’re out in public, there is no reasonable expectation

of privacy. It's how we distinguish, you know, what's public and what's private," he said. "When you're in your home, that's when you have the greatest expectation of privacy."

He noted that privacy laws vary by state and emphasized that New York "probably has less privacy than other states depending on what you're filming for."

What a person does with a recording after taking it, however, can change the situation. "The thing that I tell folks all the time is that it's a completely different bundle of rights when you use a picture and you do something that might be defamatory or hold someone up to false light," Mr. Osterreicher said.

"I think, you know, the fact that this person recorded it, that was fine," he said. "But what they did with it afterwards, she might have a very sound cause of action against that person for doing what they did."

Having monkeypox, or even being believed to have monkeypox, can come at an emotional cost. "People are afraid to have it associated with them because of social stigma, ostracization and assumptions made about their sexual or intimate lives," said Alexander Borsa, a doctoral student in sociomedical sciences at Columbia University and a researcher with the Harvard GenderSci Lab. Mr. Borsa has also been part of a New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene working group dealing with monkeypox.

Mr. Borsa highlighted how some TikTok videos, [such as those from people speaking in detail about what it is like to have monkeypox](#), could be a positive use of the app. But he also noted it was not surprising to see the platform being weaponized in this way, as many L.G.B.T.Q. people seek guidance and treatment information online.

For now, at least, Ms. Simon's response video is the one demanding the attention of TikTok's fickle algorithm, and she has since heard from a number of strangers whose lives have also been affected by neurofibromatosis type 1.

"I don't think I would have ever honestly put myself out there like that to find those people otherwise. It is isolating, and there's not a lot of people to talk to about it, especially, you know, in front of me, at least, or at least in my community and in the places, the spaces that I occupy," Ms. Simon said of her condition. "I don't really even talk to my friends about it. So again, for these strangers out of nowhere, it kind of, it did feel ... that part felt OK."

In order to send a direct message on TikTok, both parties must follow each other. The person who posted the original video has since followed her TikTok account, Ms. Simon said, but she is uninterested in reciprocating. "I would have said exactly what I said in the video," Ms. Simon said of the two potentially connecting.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 DOJ paper-only for sensitive court cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/top-justice-official-paper-only/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/top-justice-official-paper-only/</a>
GIST	<p>The Justice Department has filed its most sensitive court documents on paper since January 2021 to avoid any chance of a breach or vulnerability in electronic filing systems compromising its high stakes cases.</p> <p>In an interview this week, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for National Security Adam Hickey told CyberScoop the department implemented the policy last year but did not connect that change to any specific breach or cybersecurity event.</p> <p>However, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts did reveal "an apparent compromise" of the court system's electronic case files on Jan 6, 2021.</p> <p>That breach received more attention last week when House Judiciary Committee Chairman Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., <a href="#">revealed the U.S. federal court system</a> is contending with "an incredibly significant and sophisticated cybersecurity breach." He added that the incident dated to early 2020 and that it "had lingering impacts" on the DOJ and other agencies.</p>

Nadler said he only learned about the breach in March and was struck by the “startling breadth and scope of the court’s document management system’s security failure.”

While Hickey would not confirm or deny that the incident Nadler referenced had occurred, he told CyberScoop on Tuesday that he has been working with the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to improve security protocols for highly sensitive documents since January 2021.

“Big picture: Our sealed documents are obviously very important to us,” Hickey said. “That’s going to include everything from search warrants, subpoenas, non-disclosure orders, sealed charges [and] arrest warrants so protecting them is an important part of what we need, what the people need, and I’m glad we’re working with the courts to ensure it.”

Hickey said the takeaway for the court system is that sometimes the old-fashioned way of doing things is safer. He added that the paper-only system applies only to the most sensitive sealed documents as opposed to all of them.

“It’s a lesson by the way, a fairly familiar adage, that going online is not always the best thing,” Hickey added. “Convenience is great, but security is not, you know, in any internet connected system is going to be different from what it would be on paper.”

Hickey said that at the outset of his work with court system administrators [new “guidance” was crafted for prosecutors nationwide](#), directing them to only file highly sensitive court documents on paper or in what Hickey called a more secure “standalone system” via thumb drives.

“There are courts across the country where we are filing things in hard copy only,” Hickey said. “It’s a business process change so we have to train prosecutors around the country. There may be a different way to file documents depending on how sensitive they are so that requires relearning certain behaviors.”

Hickey said he has been working with US Attorney’s Offices nationwide to send the message that they should “take advantage of this parallel filing process.”

In its statement last January, the AO said that discovery of the breach followed a December 2020 alert from the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which issued an [emergency directive](#) regarding “a known compromise involving SolarWinds Orion products that are currently being exploited by malicious actors.”

The AO said it immediately notified courts of the development and that as a result the judiciary suspended “all national and local use of this IT network monitoring and management tool.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Hackers breach German DIHK coalition</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/german-chambers-of-industry-and-commerce-hit-by-massive-cyberattack/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/german-chambers-of-industry-and-commerce-hit-by-massive-cyberattack/</a>
GIST	<p>The Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) was forced to shut down all of its IT systems and switch off digital services, telephones, and email servers, in response to a cyberattack.</p> <p>DIHK is a coalition of 79 chambers representing companies within the German state, with over three million members comprising businesses ranging from small shops to large enterprises in the country.</p> <p>The organization deals with legal representation, consultation, foreign trade promotion, training, regional economic development, and offers general support services to its members.</p> <p><b>Hackers breach DIHK</b></p>



A short statement published on the [DIHK site](#) describes the shutdown as a precaution and a way to give IT teams time to develop a solution and build up defense.

Some services for companies are being made gradually available again after a thorough checking to ensure that it would be safe to use them. However, the restoration is only partial at this time.

The General Manager of DIHK, Michael Bergmann, has informed the public via a LinkedIn post that the cyberattack occurred yesterday, Wednesday, and characterized the incident as 'massive.'

#### **Bergmann's statement on LinkedIn**

"At this stage, we cannot predict how long the (urgent shutdown) measures will be necessary," commented Bergmann.

While the cyberattack carries the signs of ransomware, with systems being shut down to prevent the spread of the malware, this hasn't been officially confirmed yet.

Also, there have been no announcements of successfully compromising DIHK on any of the major ransomware extortion sites, although it would be too early for that.

German tech news portal [Heise.de](#) reports that the attack's impact appears to have no regional focus, as individual divisions in North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Bavaria, and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania have all confirmed facing problems.

For example, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Köln informed the public that phone lines work to a limited extent, while its website was still offline at the time of this writing.

In Köln's case, the shutdown of the systems is also presented as a precautionary measure, which further strengthens the hypothesis of a ransomware attack.

Bleeping Computer is in the process of collecting more information on the incident, and we will update this post as soon as we know more.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Gaming sector cyberattacks up 167%</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/gaming-sector-cyberattacks-167/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/gaming-sector-cyberattacks-167/</a>
GIST	<p>Cyber-attacks in the gaming sector have increased by 167% in the last year, according to a new report by cybersecurity firm <a href="#">Akamai</a>.</p> <p>Titled <a href="#">Gaming Respawned</a>, the research also found that the United States is the main target of attackers, followed by Switzerland, India, Japan, the United Kingdom and other nations throughout Europe and Asia.</p> <p>Additionally, the Akamai report claimed gaming is the industry hit by the most distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks globally, accounting for 35% of all DDoS traffic worldwide.</p> <p>“As gaming activity has increased and evolved, so has the value of disrupting it through cyber-attacks,” explained Jonathan Singer, Akamai's senior strategist, media and entertainment industries.</p> <p>“Cyber-criminals typically disrupt live services and co-opt credentials to steal gaming assets. Also, with the industry’s expansion into cloud gaming, new threat surfaces have opened up for attackers by bringing in new players who are prime targets for bad actors.”</p> <p>More generally, Akamai said they have observed some key trends since their last report on <a href="#">threats in the gaming industry</a>.</p>

	<p>The first relates to the fact that the gaming industry shows no signs of slowing down from the boost that COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing gave to gaming.</p> <p>Secondly, cyber-criminals have continued perpetrating their attacks on gamers and game platforms, with web application attacks having more than doubled over the past year. In this regard, attacks comprise three key attack vectors: LFI, SQLi and XSS. DDoS and ransomware also remained major threats, according to Akamai.</p> <p>Further, while the growth of cloud gaming seems to keep growing, so does the game industry's overall attack surface.</p> <p>"Plus, the growth of other lucrative aspects of the gaming industry will continue to attract bad actors," read the report.</p> <p>Microtransactions, for example, represent a huge draw for criminals who can capitalize on the spending power of gamers and the fungible nature of virtual assets, according to the report.</p> <p>"Cyber-criminals know there is value in gaming, and they will continue to invent ways of getting it or exploiting the flow of virtual funds."</p> <p>The report comes roughly a year after hackers <a href="#">stole a wealth of data</a> from gaming giant Electronic Arts (EA).</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 China-linked disinformation campaign</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/risk/massive-china-disinformation-campaign-pr-firm">https://www.darkreading.com/risk/massive-china-disinformation-campaign-pr-firm</a>
GIST	<p>A fake-news influence campaign based in China is leveraging at least 72 inauthentic news sites to push content strategically aligned with the political interests of the People's Republic of China (PRC) across the globe and in multiple languages.</p> <p>The sites are linked to a Chinese public-relations firm called Shanghai Haixun Technology, according to a report from Mandiant, which dubbed the campaign "HaiEnergy." To disseminate the content, the effort makes use of various social-media accounts with hundreds of thousands of followers.</p> <p>The purpose of the campaign is to target global audiences with messaging intended to improve the international image of China — and to discredit critics of its policies. According to the <a href="#">new Mandiant report</a>, the campaign narratives include promoting the reform of Hong Kong's electoral system — giving the mainland government more control over choosing candidates — and criticizing the United States and its allies.</p> <p>At the start of the month, several of the sites published articles critical of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's recently concluded trip to Taiwan, warning her to "stay away from Taiwan."</p> <p>The content also attempts to discredit outspoken government opponents, including German anthropologist Adrian Zenz, who is known for his research on China's autonomous Xinjiang territory in the northwest, where there has been a reported genocide against the Uyghur population.</p> <p>This was done via website articles and social-media posts, featuring what Mandiant suspects to be "at least three fabricated letters, based on obvious grammatical errors and typos."</p> <p>One letter was observed being used by a Twitter account belonging to a suspected inauthentic persona "Jonas Drostén" (@Jonas_drosten), who posted a tweet containing images of three letters. The tweet, and one of the letters, alleges that Adrian received "financial support from US Senator Marco Rubio and former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon."</p>

The Uyghur ethnic minority community has in the past [been a target of multiple other disinformation efforts](#).

### **Outsourcing Fake News Efforts**

Mandiant researchers were not able to determine whether Shanghai Haixun Technology is aware of the fakeness of the HaiEnergy effort, but the researchers found evidence that the campaign has leveraged services and infrastructure belonging to the PR firm to host and distribute content.

The campaign's use of third-party infrastructure allows the operators behind the campaign to obfuscate their identities while distributing content. And the use of a PR firm in this campaign may also be suggestive of [recent trends noted by Meta](#) (PDF) regarding the increased outsourcing of influence operations to third parties.

The Mandiant report also notes that actors that use PR firms may also do so to lower the barrier to entry for such activity to actors with limited experience in such areas.

"The campaign does not appear to be particularly sophisticated, as evidenced at least in part by the seeming lack of substantial engagement outside of inauthentic amplification of its content," says Ryan Serabian, senior analyst at Mandiant.

For instance, some of the social-media accounts outright note that they've been commissioned to promote content, and their bios suggest that they were willing to do "paid promos."

Serabian explains that social-media platforms, governments, and other organizations increasingly look to [root out inauthentic information activity](#), so he expects that actors will adapt new tactics and strategies, like contracting PR firms, to continue to achieve their aims.

"As we've highlighted, such actors might seek to leverage PR firms to distribute content, and they may also become more inventive in the types of content they distribute, such as by way of using technology like artificial intelligence-generated ['deepfake' images](#) and videos," he says.

This particular operation follows the efforts of Russian operatives, and those allied with Russian interests, which [unleashed a deluge of disinformation](#) and fake news to try and sow fear and confusion in Ukraine following the invasion of that nation.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 'RapperBot' brute-force Linux SSH servers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-linux-malware-brute-forces-ssh-servers-to-breach-networks/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-linux-malware-brute-forces-ssh-servers-to-breach-networks/</a>
GIST	<p>A new botnet called 'RapperBot' is being used in attacks since mid-June 2022, focusing on brute-forcing its way into Linux SSH servers to establish a foothold on the device.</p> <p>The researchers show that RapperBot is based on the Mirai trojan but deviates from the original malware's normal behavior, which is uncontrolled propagation to as many devices as possible.</p> <p>Instead, RapperBot is more tightly controlled, has limited DDoS capabilities, and its operation appears geared towards initial server access, likely to be used as stepping stones for lateral movement within a network.</p> <p>Over the past 1.5 months since its discovery, the new botnet used over 3,500 unique IPs worldwide to scan and attempt brute-forcing Linux SSH servers.</p> <p><b>Mirai-based, but different</b></p> <p>The new botnet was discovered in the wild by threat hunters at Fortinet, who noticed the IoT malware featured some unusual SSH-related strings and decided to investigate further.</p>

RapperBot proved to be a Mirai fork, but with its own command and control (C2) protocol, unique features, and atypical (for a botnet) post-compromise activity.

"Unlike the majority of Mirai variants, which natively brute force Telnet servers using default or weak passwords, RapperBot exclusively scans and attempts to brute force SSH servers configured to accept password authentication," explains the [Fortinet report](#).

"The bulk of the malware code contains an implementation of an SSH 2.0 client that can connect and brute force any SSH server that supports Diffie-Hellmann key exchange with 768-bit or 2048-bit keys and data encryption using AES128-CTR."

The SSH brute-forcing relies on a list of credentials downloaded from the C2 via host-unique TCP requests, while the malware reports back to the C2 when it succeeded.

Fortinet researchers followed the bot and continued to sample new variants, noticing that RapperBot used a self-propagation mechanism via a remote binary downloader, which was removed by the threat actors in mid-July.

The newer variants circulating at that time featured a shell command that replaced the victim's SSH keys with the actor's, essentially establishing persistence that's maintained even after SSH password changes.

Moreover, RapperBot added a system to append the actor's SSH key to the host's "~/.ssh/authorized\_keys," which helps maintain access on the server between reboots or even if the malware is found and deleted.

In the most recent samples analyzed by the researchers, the bot adds the root user "suhelper" on the compromised endpoints and creates a Cron job that re-adds the user every hour in case an admin discovers the account and deletes it.

Also, it's worth noting that the malware authors added extra layers of obfuscation to the strings in later samples, like XOR encoding.

#### **RapperBot's goal**

Most botnets either perform DDoS attacks or engage in coin-mining by hijacking the host's available computational resources, and some do both.

The goal of RapperBot, however, isn't evident, as the authors have kept its DDoS functions limited and even removed and re-introduced them at some point.

Also, the removal of self-propagation and the addition of persistence and detection-avoidance mechanisms indicate that the botnet's operators may be interested in initial access sales to ransomware actors.

Fortinet reports that its analysts saw no additional payloads delivered post-compromise during the monitoring period, so the malware just nests on the infected Linux hosts and sits dormant.

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HEADLINE	08/04 CISA: top malware strains of 2021
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cybersecurity-agencies-reveal-last-year-s-top-malware-strains/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cybersecurity-agencies-reveal-last-year-s-top-malware-strains/</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released a list of the topmost detected malware strains last year in a joint advisory with the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC).</p> <p>"Most of the top malware strains have been in use for more than five years with their respective code bases evolving into multiple variations," the cybersecurity agencies said.</p>

"The most prolific malware users of the top malware strains are cyber criminals, who use malware to deliver ransomware or facilitate theft of personal and financial information."

The top malware strains observed in 2021 include Agent Tesla, AZORult, Formbook, Ursnif, LokiBot, MOUSEISLAND, NanoCore, Qakbot, Remcos, TrickBot, and GootLoader.

Out of these, Agent Tesla, AZORult, Formbook, LokiBot, NanoCore, Remcos, and TrickBot have been used in attacks for at least the last five years, while Qakbot and Ursnif have been used for over a decade. These malware families' longevity is due to their developers' ongoing efforts to upgrade them by adding new capabilities and ways to evade detection.

"Developers of these top 2021 malware strains continue to support, improve, and distribute their malware over several years. Malware developers benefit from lucrative cyber operations with low risk of negative consequences," the agencies added.

"Many malware developers often operate from locations with few legal prohibitions against malware development and deployment."

### Malware defense tips

The joint advisory includes Snort signatures for all malware in the top to detect payloads by monitoring network traffic and a list of mitigation measures.

CISA and ACSC encourage admins and security teams to apply the following mitigations to defend against malware attacks:

- Update software, including operating systems, applications, and firmware, on I.T. network assets
- Enforce MFA to the greatest extent possible
- If you use RDP and/or other potentially risky services, secure and monitor them closely
- Maintain offline (i.e., physically disconnected) backups of data
- Provide end-user awareness and training to help block social engineering and spearphishing attacks
- Implement network segmentation to separate network segments based on role and functionality

In April, cybersecurity authorities worldwide, in partnership with the NSA and the FBI, also released a list of the [top 15 vulnerabilities routinely exploited](#) in attacks during 2021.

CISA and the FBI have also published [a list of the top 10 most exploited security bugs](#) between 2016 and 2019 and a top of [most routinely abused bugs in 2020](#) in collaboration with the ACSC and U.K.'s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

In June, MITRE also shared this year's list of [top 25 most dangerous software bugs](#) after revealing the [topmost dangerous programming, design, and architecture security flaws plaguing hardware](#) in November 2021.

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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	08/04 FBI: potential attacks link to Afghanistan
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/04/politics/christopher-wray-terrorist-attacks/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/04/politics/christopher-wray-terrorist-attacks/index.html</a>
GIST	FBI Director Christopher Wray on Thursday expressed concern over potential terrorist attacks on US soil emanating from Afghanistan, citing “growing intelligence gaps” since the <a href="#">US pulled its troops out</a> of the country in 2021.

During a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham asked Wray, “Are you worried about an attack on the homeland emanating from places like Afghanistan?”

“We are,” Wray responded. “Especially now that we’re out, I’m worried about the potential loss of sources and (intelligence) collection over there.”

The FBI director added that he was worried terrorists in the US could be inspired by the [potential growth of terrorist organizations](#) in Afghanistan. “I’m worried about the possibility that we will see al Qaeda reconstitute, ISIS-K potentially taking advantage of the deteriorating security environment, and I’m worried about terrorists, including here in the United States, being inspired by what they see over there,” Wray said.

His comments come just days after the US [killed al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) in Afghanistan via drone strike. In announcing the operation, President Joe Biden said Monday, “I made a promise to the American people that we continue to conduct effective counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and beyond. We’ve done just that.”

Biden pledged that Zawahiri “will never again allow Afghanistan to become a terrorist safe haven, because he is gone and we’re going to make sure that nothing else happens.”

Still, when asked Thursday whether he was surprised that Zawahiri was living in Afghanistan, Wray said he was “not surprised, but disappointed.”

Wray’s comments echo a “worldwide caution update” issued by the State Department earlier this week in the wake of Zawahiri’s death. “The Department of State believes there is a higher potential for anti-American violence given the death of Ayman al-Zawahiri on July 31, 2022,” the notice said.

“Current information suggests that terrorist organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. interests in multiple regions across the globe,” it described.

“These attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, and bombings.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/05 FBI: anti-govt. extremism ‘really surged’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/anti-government-extremism-has-really-surged-since-2020-wray-tells-senators/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/anti-government-extremism-has-really-surged-since-2020-wray-tells-senators/</a>
GIST	<p>Amid law enforcement seeing an “alarming number” of guns modified to make them fully automatic and violent extremists using “crude IEDs” based on online instructions, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the Senate Judiciary Committee at an oversight hearing Thursday that anti-government “has really surged” since 2020.</p> <p>Wray noted that he just passed the five-year mark in his tenure as director, and stressed “how proud I am to serve alongside the 38,000 men and women who make up the FBI.” As of next week, Wray will have visited all 56 FBI field offices twice.</p> <p>“The breadth, depth, and complexity of the threats our folks are tackling are immense,” he said, stating that in addition to domestic threats, China’s malign activities, and cyber threats “the recent Zawahiri strike reinforces the threat of foreign terrorist organizations, like al-Qaeda, attempting to reconstitute in Afghanistan.”</p> <p>“They’re countering hate crimes, including an alarming number of threats aimed at Asian-Americans, historically black colleges and universities, religious institutions, and other public spaces across the country,” he said of the FBI workforce. “They’re ensuring the integrity of elections and working to protect the election workers who administer them.”</p>



“The range of criminal and national security threats that we face as a nation has never been greater or more diverse, and the demands and expectations on the FBI have never been higher. Our fellow citizens look to us to protect the United States from all those threats.”

Chairman Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) asked Wray about movement in the investigation of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. “The numbers now are 850 suspects have been arrested, but the FBI is still trying to identify more than 350 suspects believed to have committed violent acts on the Capitol grounds. That is the same number of unidentified suspects that were reported 10 months, one year and 14 months after the event,” Durbin asked. “What has made it so difficult to identify these 350 additional suspects?”

“A lot of the initial people that we were able to find and arrest and charge made themselves widely visible and easily identifiable on social media or otherwise. But there were a certain number of people who concealed themselves more effectively. And so part of it is a little more challenging to get those people identified,” Wray replied. “That’s part of it. And then, of course — I have to be a little bit careful what I say here, but we are continuing to develop some of the more complicated parts of the investigation in terms of conspiracy charges and that sort of thing. So that may also contribute to some of it.”

Wray told senators “we did not have, I think, any specific, credible intelligence that pointed to thousands of people breaching the Capitol” that day, but “one of the things that we are determined to do on our part, to make sure we can do our part to make sure that nothing like that ever happens again, is to see how we can go about developing better sources — any time in the intelligence field when there is any kind of successful attack, we make a point of trying to figure out are there better ways to develop sources, higher quality sources, etc. So we’re doing that now.”

Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) asked whether the FBI has “a criteria that it uses to evaluate whether information is or isn’t disinformation.”

“I think sometimes this gets lost in a lot of the public commentary: We’re not out there investigating whether or not information that we see floating around is truthful or false, in the first instance. Our focus in the malign foreign influence space, which is I think what you’re driving at, is on whether or not there’s a foreign adversary of some sort potentially trying to push the information,” Wray said. “And then from there, we look into it... there’s a process to make sure that we are approaching that information consistently and objectively. And, of course, the defensive briefings that we do, whether it’s for members of Congress, officials in the administration, businesses, universities, what have you, the whole point of the defensive briefing is to share information with the recipient to educate them so that they can make decisions about what they want to do. But again, that’s not an FBI- coordinated process, an interagency framework led by ODNI and I on that.”

Voicing concern about the rise in gun purchases “especially since the FBI is required to abandon any background check that is not completed in 88 days,” Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) asked, “What has the FBI done to ensure the background check system remains effective during this spike in sales of guns? And do you need additional resources or authorities to make sure background checks are completed effectively and efficiently?”

Wray confirmed there has been “a significant increase in volume of NICS checks ... and of course with some of the recent legislation that’s been passed, I expect we’ll have even more.”

“We have surged resources to try to keep up with the volume and the demand, but we will need more,” the director continued. “Congress has already been helpful in giving us some additional resources, but my expectation is that we will continue to need more resources, not just personnel resources, but systems IT resources because the whole essence of the NICS system is taxing in terms of system upgrades and so forth. And the interconnectivity and the accessibility for our state local partners.”

Wray noted that “you might be surprised, but it’s sometimes remarkable how many convicted felons still walk into a gun store and try to buy a gun.”

During discussion about recent unrest connected to the overturning of Roe v. Wade, Wray said “there are just way too many people who seem to think that that justifies engaging in violence and destruction of property and threats of violence... I feel like every day, I’m getting briefed on somebody throwing a Molotov cocktail at someone for some issue. It’s crazy.”

Wray said law enforcement officials are seeing “an alarming number of situations in which weapons are modified to make them fully automatic — and it’s almost invariably happening in the hands of somebody who is a dangerous criminal to begin with, and it’s now just even more dangerous.” The FBI is also “seeing violent extremists use crude IEDs that they can make fairly easily off of the Internet.”

Asked about the greatest domestic threat, Wray said it is “largely lone actors already here, largely radicalized online, who use easily obtainable weapons to attack soft targets, and a big chunk of those are domestic violent extremists.”

“Another big chunk of those are homegrown violent extremists inspired by ISIS and jihad, but they’re people who are already here and they have a lot in common. Of the domestic violent extremists, racially motivated violent extremism is responsible for the most lethal attacks that we’ve seen in the country over the last several years,” he said. “And of the racially motivated violent extremism, the biggest bucket is those who advocate for the superiority of the white race.”

“I will say that, over the last couple of years, another group within the domestic violent extremism bucket has really surged. And that really started in 2020, I would say, through the summer and then continuing on to the present,” Wray continued. “And that’s what we put into the category of anti-government, anti-authority, violent extremism. Sometimes there’s overlap, but it’s different. And so, that includes everything from militia violent extremism all the way to anarchist violent extremism. What they all have in common is a focus on institutions of government and law enforcement as their likely target.”

“What they want to do is tear down the government,” said Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.).

“Correct,” Wray agreed.

“Support insurrections like we saw on January 6th, and they are fostered by a lot of online communication using social media, correct?” Blumenthal asked.

“Correct,” Wray replied.

“And what can be done to in effect counter the use of social media to incite that violence?” the senator asked. “And is social media big tech doing enough now?”

“Well, what can be done, I would say a couple of things: One is we are trying to encourage more people — just as they do in the physical world, we want them in the virtual world, if they see something, say something. If they see somebody expressing threats of violence, criminal activity on the Internet, we want people to reach out to law enforcement and let them know so we can prevent an attack,” Wray said. “So, we need more and more of that. You mentioned the social media companies. We do try to work with the social media companies, and there are things that they can and some of them do using violations of their terms of service to take accounts down and things like that.”

“But there is, I think, a phenomenon that we all have to recognize, which is that the social media industry, you know, enjoys the ability to amplify and connect people. And there’s good things that come with that and there are bad things that come with that. And I think we would all be in a better place the more of those companies can take more responsibility for misuse, abuse of their platforms.”

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HEADLINE	08/04 Domestic extremists use cryptocurrency
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/featured/profit-of-hate-how-domestic-extremists-are-embracing-cryptocurrency/">https://www.hstoday.us/featured/profit-of-hate-how-domestic-extremists-are-embracing-cryptocurrency/</a>

America's domestic extremists are flocking to cryptocurrency and have raised millions of dollars from crypto donations over the last several years. Neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and other extremist figures are not new to cryptocurrency – indeed, some of these individuals were among its early adopters, and have received cryptocurrency donations [since](#) at least 2016. But this milieu has, out of necessity, more rapidly embraced cryptocurrency since the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, which prompted many financial services providers to deplatform certain extremist groups. This has made Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies an attractive digital alternative for many domestic extremists.

Our research highlights three important ways that domestic extremists use cryptocurrencies. First, they receive donations from supporters for content they produce, such as video streams, podcasts, and message boards. Second, extremist groups take cryptocurrency as payment for merchandise, such as apparel, books, and accessories. In these cases, cryptocurrency payment often exists alongside more traditional payment methods, supplementing rather than supplanting credit cards, debit cards, and other forms of payment. Third, domestic extremists solicit cryptocurrency to support their operations, such as paying for legal defense, purchasing supplies (including VPNs), or providing support to a group or to individuals.

### **Crypto for Content**

Content streams have proven to be a relatively lucrative source of cryptocurrency financing for extremists, aided by the rise of platforms such as the video streaming service DLive, the social networking site Minds, and the video hosting service BitChute. For example, as the January 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol unfolded, some of the rioters took to livestreaming it on DLive, a site popular with extremists due to its minimal moderation. Anthime “Tim” Gionet, better known by the moniker “Baked Alaska,” raked in over \$2,000 from his livestream of the riot – which included him [breaking into](#) Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's office. Gionet raised this amount using “lemons,” DLive's virtual currency. DLive allows viewers to buy lemons using cryptocurrencies, including Bitcoin, Bitcoin Cash, Litecoin, Ethereum, and USD Coin. Viewers can send the lemons to streamers as tips, which the streamers can then cash out of their DLive accounts as currency.

Even before the events of January 6, Megan Squire, a computer science professor at Elon University, [discovered](#) that several known extremists were earning five to six figures annually from their DLive streams. These included, among others, Nick Fuentes, the host of the *America First* podcast that spreads the tenets of the white nationalist movement, and Martin Sellner of Generation Identity, an Austrian citizen who “became infamous for corresponding with” Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 Muslim worshippers in New Zealand in 2019. (Tarrant's video of the attack and manifesto were posted on the online message board Kiwi Farms, which itself accepts cryptocurrency donations, including Bitcoin, Litecoin, Ethereum, Monero, and Cardano.)

According to Squire, Nick Fuentes, who is also a leader of the white nationalist and antisemitic group Groyper Army, [raised](#) roughly \$94,000 on DLive between April 2020 and January 2021. Fuentes also [received](#) a bitcoin donation that came out to nearly \$250,000 in December 2020 from a French donor who was eventually identified as Laurent Bachelier. DLive banned Fuentes from the platform after the Capitol riot.

Other groups within the white supremacist ecosystem that solicit cryptocurrency donations include The Right Stuff (TRS), a neo-Nazi media network founded and run by Michael “Enoch” Peinovich. Peinovich's claim to fame is creating the [antisemitic “\(\(\(echo\)\)\)” meme](#), which other antisemitic figures began to use on social media platforms to denote Jewish names. Among the shows that TRS hosts are *Fash the Nation* and *The Daily Shoah*, which promote Holocaust denialism and white supremacy. TRS's website solicits cryptocurrency donations in Bitcoin, Dogecoin, Bitcoin Cash, Monero, and Ethereum.

*The Daily Stormer* is a neo-Nazi message board and propaganda site run by Andrew Anglin with assistance from webmaster Andrew “weev” Auernheimer. Anglin was an early adopter of cryptocurrency and is [known](#) to possess at least 200 Bitcoin wallet addresses. *The Daily Stormer*'s name is a nod to the Nazi-era propaganda sheet *Der Stürmer*. The website frequently promotes neo-Nazism, white supremacy, racism, and antisemitism. Though the website publicly claims to reject violence, it posts content implicitly

threatening violence against racial and ethnic minorities, including black people and Jews. *The Daily Stormer* previously accepted donations in Bitcoin, but now only accepts Monero – a privacy coin that claims to be virtually untraceable – due to concerns over Bitcoin’s lack of complete anonymity.

Notably, *The Daily Stormer* [received](#) a donation of 14.88 bitcoins in the aftermath of the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally – worth more than \$60,000 at the time – to keep the site afloat as web service providers began to cut the site off. The amount of the donation is an explicit reference to popular white supremacist slogans. The 14 is a reference to the late white supremacist David Lane’s “14 Words”: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” The 88 stands for *Heil Hitler*, with H being the eighth letter of the alphabet – thus 88 in this context denotes *HH*. A forensic analysis of the donation found that the sender possessed \$25 million in Bitcoin.

*Stormfront*, another white supremacist message board, accepts donations in Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Litecoin. Like Anglin, *Stormfront* creator Don Black was an early adopter of cryptocurrency. Several people who have perpetrated white supremacist violence have [posted](#) on *Stormfront*, with the most notorious being Anders Breivik, whose July 2011 attacks in Norway claimed 77 lives.

*Counter-Currents* is a media outlet run by Greg Johnson that advocates for the creation of a white [ethno-state](#). The outlet is a prolific publisher of articles, podcasts, and books, and is somewhat distinctive compared to other white nationalist outlets in its employment of an academic-type tone. *Counter-Currents* [accepts donations](#) in over 10 kinds of cryptocurrency, including Bitcoin, Ethereum, Litecoin, and Monero.

White Rabbit Radio is a white nationalist media platform hosted by Timothy Gallagher Murdock, who uses the pseudonym Horus the Avenger. Murdock is an advocate of the great replacement conspiracy theory, which posits that non-white immigration and race mixing are intentionally destroying the white race. The website accepts donations in Bitcoin, Monero, Cardano, Ethereum, Litecoin, and other cryptocurrencies.

### **Crypto for Commodities**

A quick Internet search will reveal an abundance of extremist merchandise available for purchase, often with cryptocurrency. Shirts saying [“6MWE”](#) (a Holocaust reference that stands for *6 Million Wasn’t Enough*) have been spotted at protests held by the Proud Boys, and an individual wearing a [“Camp Auschwitz”](#) sweatshirt was among the mob that assaulted the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Selling merchandise can help to both sustain a group financially and spread its message to a broader audience. Merchandise also functions as a membership-identifying and membership-promoting device. As Daniel J. Rogers, co-founder and chief technology officer of the Global Disinformation Index, noted in [Congressional testimony](#), “merchandise also acts like a team jersey for the hate groups, bolstering the narrative itself and helping the groups recruit new members.”

The Rise Above Movement (RAM) exemplifies the potential of white supremacist merchandising. RAM is an independent white supremacist group that combines skinheads’ emphasis on street fighting with slick marketing. RAM operates a merchandise and media arm dubbed Will2Rise (W2R), which sells t-shirts, accessories, stickers, bottoms, and outerwear. W2R [advertises](#) what it calls an “ethical supply chain,” proudly stating that all its products are manufactured in Eastern Europe, “so not a single hand touches the production that is not of like mind.” W2R’s merchandise can be purchased with Bitcoin, Cardano, Ethereum, Polkadot, and Litecoin.

Nick Fuentes operates an *America First*-themed store that accepts cryptocurrency. People wearing *America First* merchandise were among the mob that [stormed](#) the Capitol on January 6, 2021. The store features shirts, flags, hats, and mugs, along with a seasonal collection titled “White Boy Summer,” all of which can be purchased with Litecoin.

### **Crypto for Costs**

Extremist groups and individuals frequently request cryptocurrency donations to pay for various costs. Such requests can be for specific uses, such as legal defense funds, but most solicitations tend not to include earmarks and function instead as donations for general support.

Jason Kessler, the organizer of the Unite the Right rally, sought cryptocurrency donations for his legal defense fund following the rally. Kessler's website lists Bitcoin as one way to donate to the fund. One campaign for Kessler's legal defense fund on the crowdfunding site GiveSendGo – which has also hosted fundraisers for people involved in the January 6 riot – lists Bitcoin and Monero as ways to support the fund, though Kessler's website mentions only Bitcoin. Kessler also solicits Bitcoin donations for his “Investigative Journalism and Commentary,” [claiming](#) that “I am committed to covering dissident politics and white civil rights with my unique, take-no-prisoners style. Cancelled on both the left and right, I rely on you to fund my work.”

Douglass Mackey, a white nationalist and internet troll, also received cryptocurrency donations for his legal defense fund. Mackey was arrested in January 2021 on federal charges of disseminating disinformation intended to prevent people from exercising their constitutional right to vote. Mackey is accused of trying to bait thousands of African Americans into casting invalid votes in 2016, using social media to spread false claims that voters could avoid lines at their polling place by texting their choice of presidential candidate to a number he provided. As a result of Mackey's [disinformation campaign](#), “4,900 unique telephone numbers” sent messages indicating support for Hillary Clinton (whom Mackey opposed) to the number he distributed.

A [legal defense fund](#) emerged for Mackey soon after his arrest. Data from Megan Squire and Hannah Gais shows that on March 11, 2021, one donor gave \$58,662.50 in Bitcoin to the fund, making up most of its balance. The fund's [website](#) also lists wallet addresses for Ethereum, Monero, Dogecoin, and ZCash. The [National Socialist Movement](#) (NSM) bills itself as “America's Premier White Civil Rights Organization” and advocates for Nazism in the United States. The group claims to disavow violence but has in the past called for the forceful expulsion of all non-whites from the United States. In 2017, an individual affiliated with the group tried to [attack](#) black passengers on an Amtrak train. NSM's website [accepts](#) Bitcoin donations.

Atomwaffen Division (AWD), a neo-Nazi accelerationist group with an international membership, [solicited](#) Monero donations through a now-defunct website. AWD ostensibly disbanded in March 2020, but elements of AWD rebranded themselves as the National Socialist Order, while other individuals remain active under the AWD name. AWD has hosted paramilitary training camps in several states, featuring weapons training, physical fitness exercises, and hand-to-hand combat training.

### **Enhancing Privacy**

As law enforcement has ramped up its investigations into domestic extremist groups, extremists have sought new ways to obfuscate their identities and make tracing cryptocurrency payments tougher. Fiat entry and exit points – where fiat money is converted into or out of cryptocurrency – are the most vulnerable points for extremists in their attempts to couch identities. Governments have become more vigilant in applying anti-money laundering (AML) and know-your-customer (KYC) regulations to cryptocurrency exchanges, such as the Financial Action Task Force's [standards](#) for virtual assets.

However, new methods of using and transferring cryptocurrency are eroding this barrier. As merchants begin to accept cryptocurrency as payments, extremists have less need to convert funds into fiat money to procure goods and services.

One such method is usage of privacy coins such as Monero, which incorporates advanced privacy features that are not native to Bitcoin. Monero wallet addresses are designed to be difficult to link to their owners. Monero also groups together multiple transactions to hide the movement of money, in addition to obscuring transaction amounts. One U.S. company, CipherTrace, claims to have developed a method to conduct [“enhanced Monero tracing”](#) and future protocols will likely be developed by other companies. But, for now, privacy coins remain harder to link to individuals.



Extremists have also used a tactic called *mixing* to further mask ownership of transactions and funds. As [CoinDesk](#) notes, a mixer is a “service where you could send your bitcoin, pay a small fee, and then receive different bitcoin than the ones that were sent.” Neither the service provider nor the individuals engaging in the transaction of exchanging cryptocurrency know the identities of those involved.

*Coinjoining* is another protocol that domestic extremists use to obfuscate identity. It functions similarly to mixing. Coinjoining bundles together multiple transactions to add an additional layer of anonymity. Platforms such as Wasabi and Samurai enable coinjoining. As Wasabi [notes](#), coinjoining enables a process wherein multiple users engage in “one large transaction with multiple inputs and multiple outputs... The purpose of a CoinJoin transaction composed by multiple inputs and outputs is to break blockchain surveillance heuristics,” which examine patterns in publicly available blockchain data that may point to the identity of users.

An assessment from Europol, the European Union’s law enforcement agency, describes such mixing protocols as a “top threat” enabling the use of cryptocurrency on the dark web.

### **Future Extremist Uses of Cryptocurrency**

It is important for policymakers to think about future extremist uses of cryptocurrency. There are two particularly important further ways that domestic violent extremists may leverage enhanced privacy features that are increasingly incorporated into certain cryptocurrencies. The first is accessing markets on the dark web to purchase illicit goods and services. The second is employing self-executing “smart contracts” to outsource criminal activities, potentially including attacks.

Many easily accessible marketplaces on the dark web sell drugs, guns, ammunition, fake passports, tools for cybercrime, and stolen personal information. In 2013, a joint FBI and Europol operation shut down Silk Road, a pioneering platform for illicit activities. The platform used Bitcoin as its sole medium of exchange. In 2017, law enforcement shut down AlphaBay, a [dark web market](#) that had grown to over 10 times the size of Silk Road.

Dark web markets continue to pop up despite law enforcement’s successes. One can [find](#) assassins and hackers for hire, weapons, deadly toxins, kidnappers, mercenaries who will torture a chosen victim, and similar goods and services (though many such services are in fact being offered by scammers). The potential for extremists to use the dark web to procure illicit goods or services and pay with cryptocurrency is clear.

Extremists may also seek to exploit emerging technologies such as smart contracts as they develop. Smart contracts are a protocol developed by Ethereum. As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) notes, a [smart contract](#) is “a computerized protocol that executes the terms of a contract.” A smart contract “thus encodes the terms of a traditional contract into a computer program and executes them automatically. With blockchain technology, smart contracts can in principle be self-executing and self-enforcing, without the need for intermediaries. They could encapsulate complex terms and conditions such as those found in many financial derivatives, which are often contingent on external events such as the prices of financial instruments or their volatility.”

Domestic extremist groups could in theory use smart contracts to sponsor terrorist attackers with little direct oversight or planning, thus outsourcing their activities. A smart contract could ensure payment to a given individual, contingent upon news indicating the completion of a certain attack. In essence, extremists could wield smart contracts as “classified ads” for attacks.

While extremists have not yet employed smart contracts, it is a threat worth mentioning – and monitoring.

### **Countering Violent Extremists’ Use of Cryptocurrency**

Domestic extremists have migrated to cryptocurrencies to escape many limitations of traditional currency. Enticed by the relative anonymity of cryptocurrency and the need to circumvent a denial of service by more traditional financial institutions, domestic extremists have been able to raise millions of dollars



through cryptocurrency platforms. To mitigate the threat that domestic violent extremists pose, there are steps the U.S. government and private sector can take to target their use of cryptocurrency.

First, the U.S. government should be more aggressive in sanctioning violent white supremacist groups as terrorist entities. Designations are one of the most powerful tools the U.S. government can deploy to reduce violent white supremacists' fundraising capabilities. The government has [designated](#) only one white supremacist group, the Russian Imperial Movement, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. Designations can disrupt fundraising activities and give authorities a better understanding of extremists' financial networks and key backers. Designations would also encourage cryptocurrency companies to disengage from designated entities.

Second, policymakers should consider enacting regulations for cryptocurrencies, including privacy coins, to more firmly bring cryptocurrencies under the regulatory perimeter. Regulations will give the cryptocurrency industry transparent guidelines for how to treat illicit activity. Regulations for privacy coins could include bolstering reporting requirements for cryptocurrency exchanges that work with privacy coins. Policymakers should also consider supporting global standards on virtual assets, such as those from the Financial Action Task Force. Harmonizing global standards and regulations on cryptocurrency across different regulatory regimes would help prevent extremists' ability to conduct regulatory arbitrage.

Lastly, blockchain analysis firms and nonpartisan watchdog groups should establish public-private partnerships to monitor the use of cryptocurrency by domestic extremists. This collaboration would leverage both actors' tools to produce actionable intelligence and patch information gaps. The end result of such partnerships would be greater awareness of how extremists use cryptocurrencies.

Going forward, violent extremists will only deepen their embrace of cryptocurrency and find new uses for it. Policymakers and the private sector should seek to get ahead of the threat's evolution. Timely action will be needed to stop extremists from further profiting from their hate.

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HEADLINE	08/04 Death of AQ leader sets succession race
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/death-of-al-qaeda-leader-sets-off-succession-race-for-terrorist-group-11659641229?mod=hp_listb_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/death-of-al-qaeda-leader-sets-off-succession-race-for-terrorist-group-11659641229?mod=hp_listb_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The Central Intelligence Agency's <a href="#">killing of al Qaeda leader</a> Ayman al-Zawahiri has thrust the global terrorist group into a succession contest that will test its ties to far-flung affiliates and could give Iran a role in the outcome.</p> <p>The candidate seemingly in line to lead al Qaeda is an Egyptian former special-forces soldier, Saif al-Adel, who has served as second-in-command at the group since 2020. He is among its few leaders with a decadeslong history in the organization and seen as having the potential to serve as a figurehead for al Qaeda affiliates that stretch far beyond Afghanistan to Syria, Iraq and Africa.</p> <p>Yet Adel, who is wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in connection with the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa, is believed by counterterrorism specialists to be living under Iran's watch, and they say it is unclear whether he may be able to relocate to Afghanistan or whether he could gain legitimacy as al Qaeda's leader from Iranian soil.</p> <p>The alternative—choosing a successor from one of al Qaeda's local affiliates or another candidate—could accelerate a process of decentralization that started with the branches doing their own fundraising, operations and propaganda. It could also foster discontent among different factions a time when the group is seeking to restore its role as the global leader for a brand of terrorism that made its mark with high-profile plots against Western targets, such as <a href="#">the 9/11 attacks</a> that toppled the World Trade Center towers in 2001 and killed nearly 3,000 people.</p>

Al Qaeda's succession challenges come just as the group had begun to benefit from the [Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan](#).

[The killing of Zawahiri](#), in the heart of Afghanistan's capital, undermined the Taliban's pledge to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base that foreign terrorist organizations could use to attack the West. The Taliban had sought to update their 1990s image of protectors of al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden to gain broader recognition as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, a shift [it hopes will unlock foreign aid](#) frozen after militants ousted the country's previous leaders.

Zawahiri's death also betrays some lapses in the Taliban's own operational security and [suggests other al Qaeda leaders might not be safe in Kabul](#). The Taliban remained silent for days after the White House announced Zawahiri's death.

On Wednesday, the group broke that silence and denied it had any knowledge of his whereabouts, or even whether in fact he was killed. That runs counter to White House claims that Afghanistan's interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani of the Taliban, [knew of his location](#) and dispatched a team to clear up evidence of the strike and move his family to a new location.

"Investigation is under way now to find out about veracity of the claim," Suhail Shaheen, a Taliban spokesman who heads the group's political office in Doha, said when referring to claims that the Haqqanis, a branch of the Taliban, were safeguarding the al Qaeda leader and that the strike indeed killed him. "The leadership is in constant meetings in this regard. Findings will be shared with all."

Still, Zawahiri's death is unlikely to trigger any change in relations between al Qaeda and the Taliban, whose operations merged in the 20-year struggle against U.S. forces and the U.S.-backed government, say analysts who track extremist groups. Afghanistan remains vital territory for al Qaeda because hundreds of its members have embedded with the Taliban over the years and remain loyal to one another.

"Afghanistan is an opportunity for them, they have a government in place," said Seth Jones, who writes about security issues and is the senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C. With Mr. Haqqani now overseeing Afghanistan's Interior Ministry, "they have a partner who they know and who is running the government," he said.

Whether Adel can take the reins of the organization—and from where—are key questions of the al Qaeda succession process.

Adel was one of the al Qaeda leaders who decamped to Iran for safety after 2001 when U.S. forces invaded Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks and toppled the Taliban from power.

An Egyptian national who was born in the 1960s, Adel went from soldier to antigovernment militant, later joining al Qaeda and rising through the ranks.

He is believed to have first traveled to Afghanistan in 1989, after being arrested for his role in an attempted assassination of the Egyptian interior minister. He traveled to Somalia in 1993 and set up a training camp there, say security analysts who study al Qaeda.

Adel is believed by current and former Western officials to have been arrested in 2003 in Iran after Tehran came under pressure from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to detain extremists. The Bin Laden files, culled from the 2011 U.S. commando raid in Pakistan that killed the terror group's leader, show that al Qaeda sought to secure his release from Iran and that he may have been released as part of a prisoner swap for an Iranian diplomat captured in Yemen.

Final word on the future of Adel, who scholars of terrorism say has served as al Qaeda's second-in-command since 2020, is expected to be determined by al Qaeda's Hittin Committee, which coordinates the group's global leadership according to a recent report from the U.N. Security Council.

“Al Qaeda could end up dissolving its current line of succession in favor of appointing an affiliate leader in Zawahiri’s place, but that would be truly revolutionary and could easily exacerbate the decadelong process of decentralization and localization,” said Charles Lister, director of the Syria and Countering Terrorism & Extremism programs at the Middle East Institute, a think tank based in Washington, D.C.

Adel’s elevation, should it occur, could give Tehran an unexpected hand in the organization’s future. Iran might not tolerate one of al Qaeda’s leaders operating from its soil, but it might tacitly allow Adel to move to Afghanistan, say former counterterrorism officials.

Iranian officials, through their representatives at the United Nations in New York, didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

Adel’s time in Shiite Muslim-dominated Iran has engendered distrust among the ranks of al Qaeda, a Sunni Muslim movement whose members view Shiites as apostates, current and former Western officials and analysts have said. Some al Qaeda affiliates are said to have declined to take direction from Adel, whose roles included managing the affiliates on Zawahiri’s behalf.

“A leader of a Sunni extremist group who is believed to be based in Iran is going to have a legitimacy problem with a fair number of other aspiring Sunni extremists,” said Bernard Hudson, a veteran of the CIA and the agency’s former counterterrorism chief.

This week, Western powers are meeting with Tehran for what has been described as a last-ditch effort to revive the deal that sets curbs on Iran’s nuclear program. Hans-Jakob Schindler, former coordinator of the U.N. Security Council’s ISIL, al Qaeda and Taliban Monitoring Team, said Iran’s nuclear talks with the U.S. presented Tehran with a unique opportunity should Adel could become a bargaining chip in gridlocked talks.

“This would be an easy win for the Iranians,” said Mr. Schindler, who is now New York-based senior director at the Counter Extremism Project, an international policy organization focused on extremist ideology. “This could be a point where a chip that they’ve been guarding so carefully could play out at quite considerable benefit.”

Some U.S. officials say they are less concerned about al Qaeda’s old core group in and around Afghanistan and Pakistan—which has been severely weakened by two decades of U.S. counterterrorism strikes—than newer affiliates in Africa that might be able to mount attacks against the U.S. or its facilities in the region.

But while African affiliates may be more potent—and have greater ungoverned space in which to grow—their goals tend to be more localized.

If al Qaeda appoints someone even farther afield from its core of Afghanistan and Pakistan border areas, it risks jeopardizing its brand as a jihadist group with a global vision, security officials and analysts who track the group say.

Al Qaeda’s leadership is sensitive to that risk because its main competitor, Islamic State, already portrays its rival as lacking in ambition and having compromised itself with parochial conflicts. The groups seek money and recruits from the same pool of men hankering for violent Islamist activism.

“The future of this form of extremism and terrorism is decentralized,” said Mr. Hudson, the CIA’s former counterterrorism chief. “The world security services have gotten too good from their point of view to risk putting everything in one location and having a very defined command-and-control structure.”

Some in al Qaeda might seize upon Zawahiri’s death to advance a new generation of leadership that brings changes to the group, say those who track al Qaeda.

	<p>Michael W.S. Ryan, an independent consultant and researcher on Middle Eastern security issues who has studied Zawahiri's writings, noted that al Qaeda has been resilient after the death of many of its commanders, in part owing to its own cult of martyrdom celebrating members who are killed in combat against the U.S.</p> <p>"We or someone else kills these leaders and it doesn't seem to make much difference because they are replaced," he said. "Others see them as martyrs and an inspiration and their death gives others the opportunity to advance."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Taliban: not aware Zawahiri living in Kabul</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/04/taliban-claim-they-did-not-know-ayman-al-zawahiri-was-living-in-central-kabul">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/04/taliban-claim-they-did-not-know-ayman-al-zawahiri-was-living-in-central-kabul</a>
GIST	<p>The Taliban leadership has said they did not know that al-Qaida boss <a href="#">Ayman al-Zawahiri</a> had moved to the Afghan capital, Kabul, where the US president, Joe Biden, said he was killed by a drone strike at the weekend.</p> <p>"The Islamic Emirate of <a href="#">Afghanistan</a> has no information about Ayman al-Zawahiri's arrival and stay in Kabul," the militants said in a statement, that used their chosen name for their unrecognised regime.</p> <p>The statement was released more than three days after <a href="#">the hit on a house in the capital's Sherpur district</a>.</p> <p>Taken at face value, the claim is an extraordinary one. It suggests the Taliban have little control over the heart of their capital, including the heavily guarded area frequented by some of their most elite leadership.</p> <p>It also implies they were unable to track or control a terror group whose status was a key part of the 2020 deal with Washington that paved the way for US troops to leave, and the Taliban to return to power.</p> <p>Under the Doha agreement, the Taliban promised the US that Afghanistan would not host terror groups that threatened the US and its allies.</p> <p>The interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, just two days before the drone strike told an Indian news outlet that al-Qaida was a "dead" organisation with no presence in Afghanistan.</p> <p>However, US officials have said the apartment where Zawahiri was killed was rented by one of Haqqani's aides.</p> <p>If the Taliban denial seems barely plausible, it was perhaps the only way out of a political bind created by Zawahiri's assassination.</p> <p>The Taliban are still seeking international recognition for their rogue regime, hoping it may cushion an economic collapse by ending sanctions and releasing funds for aid and business. An aggressive response to Zawahiri's death would not further that cause.</p> <p>However, al-Qaida and its leadership are revered by many in the group's ranks, who are also likely to see a drone strike in the heart of the capital as an assault on their sovereignty. So they could not afford to ignore the hit on Zawahiri.</p> <p>Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's designated delegate to the UN who is based in Doha, said the regime was investigating both whether Zawahiri had been in Kabul, and whether he had been killed, and would share its findings.</p> <p>"Investigation is under way now to find out about veracity of ... both claims," he said in a text message to reporters.</p>

	<p>The Taliban also said in the statement they wanted “to implement the Doha pact”, and there was no threat to America from Afghanistan.</p> <p>However, the statement condemned Washington for “invad[ing] our territory and violat[ing] all international principles” with the attack, and made a barely veiled warning that it would consider retaliation in case of future drone strikes.</p> <p>Several members of the government, including Haqqani, still have bounties on their heads in relation to past terror attacks and reportedly live in fear of assassination attempts, keeping a low profile and moving regularly.</p> <p>“If such action is repeated, the responsibility of any consequences will be on the United States of America,” the statement said.</p> <p>It was an open secret in many Kabul circles that the neighbourhood was full of “Arabs”, a term understood to refer to al-Qaida operatives and their families.</p> <p>Despite the Taliban’s insistence that they did not know if the al-Qaida boss was on their doorstep, or if he was killed, the area swarmed with elite troops soon after an explosion on Sunday morning, and is now heavily guarded.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/05 Somalia al-Shabab attacks in Ethiopia</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/somalia-based-al-shabab-attacking-ethiopia-87984905">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/somalia-based-al-shabab-attacking-ethiopia-87984905</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia -- The al-Shabab extremist group has exploited Ethiopia’s internal turmoil to cross the border from neighboring Somalia in unprecedented attacks in recent weeks that a top U.S. military commander has warned could continue.</p> <p>The deadly incursions into Ethiopia, Africa’s second most populous country and long seen as an anchor of security in the Horn of Africa, are the latest sign of how deeply the recent war in the northern Tigray region and other ethnic fighting have made the country more vulnerable.</p> <p>Ethiopia has long resisted such cross-border attacks by the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab, in part by deploying troops inside Somalia, where the extremist group controls large rural parts of the country’s southern and central regions. But the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and its security forces have struggled with unrest at home especially since the Tigray conflict began in late 2020.</p> <p>Experts say al-Shabab, also emboldened by instability under Somalia’s previous administration, is seizing the chance to expand its footprint and claim the killing of scores of Ethiopian security forces. But the group is also feeling the pressure of a renewed push by Somalia’s new government and the return of U.S. forces to the country after their withdrawal by former President Donald Trump.</p> <p>The turn to Ethiopia is a significant strategic shift by al-Shabab, Matt Bryden, a security analyst with the Sahan Foundation think tank, told The Associated Press. The extremist group had never been able to conduct major operations inside Ethiopia.</p> <p>“The reports of clashes along the Ethiopia-Somalia border are just a fraction of the overall picture,” Bryden said. “We understand that planning for this offensive began more than one year ago, when the Ethiopian government appeared to be on the verge of collapse” as rival Tigray forces pushed toward the capital, Addis Ababa. Those forces later retreated, and both sides are edging toward peace talks.</p> <p>Al-Shabab has trained several thousand fighters for its Ethiopian “command,” mainly ethnic Somalis and Oromos inside Ethiopia, Bryden asserted. Ethiopia’s federal government has said it fears al-Shabab will link up with the Oromo Liberation Army, which it has designated a terror organization, though other security experts have called that unlikely.</p>

Hundreds of al-Shabab fighters were able to slip into Ethiopia last week alone and their presence has been detected near multiple communities such as El Kari, Jaraati, and Imey, Bryden said. The incursions began in late July.

“There are also credible reports of al-Shabab units deploying in the direction of Moyale,” the main border post between Ethiopia and Kenya, he said.

Somalia’s previous president, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, avoided any major confrontation with al-Shabab. But new President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has said his government will take the offensive against the group’s thousands of fighters, with the backing of returning U.S. forces.

“Al-Shabab therefore faces a much greater military challenge in Somalia than before and has therefore embarked on this Ethiopian campaign in order to preserve some of its forces and establish strategic depth,” Bryden said.

He warned that if al-Shabab establishes a stronghold in southeastern Ethiopia, “the consequences for peace and security in the region could be very serious indeed.” The fighters would be well-positioned to strike deeper into Ethiopia, into Kenya and even as far as Uganda to the west. Al-Shabab has carried out several high-profile deadly attacks inside Kenya over the years.

The outgoing head of the U.S. Africa Command, Gen. Stephen Townsend, last month warned that al-Shabab’s activities inside Ethiopia were not a “one-off” and said the fighters made it as far as 150 kilometers into the country.

Al-Shabab has long regarded Ethiopia an enemy for its long military presence inside Somalia countering the fighters. Via its Radio Andalus media arm, the extremist group has claimed killing at least 187 Ethiopian regional forces and seizing military equipment in its attacks.

Ethiopian officials have expressed alarm. On Tuesday, the country’s Somali regional president, Mustefa Omer, told a regional assembly that more than 600 al-Shabab fighters have been killed.

The region is in a lengthy war with the extremists, not just a one-time clash, he said, and “the Ethiopian federal army is currently involved in the fight against the terrorists ... and we will also work with Somalia.”

He said the goal is to create a security buffer inside Somalia to guard against further incursions. “We should not wait for the enemy to invade,” he said.

Also on Tuesday, the Somali region announced that Ethiopian military officials had arrived in Somalia’s town of Beledweyne to discuss strategies to counter al-Shabab’s incursion. The statement said Ethiopia’s soldiers in the African Union peacekeeping force in Somalia will be deployed against the extremists.

Residents of the Somali town of Yeed near the Ethiopian border told the AP they witnessed losses suffered by al-Shabab fighters in an Ethiopian attack last week. They spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution.

And a resident of Somalia’s Bakool region, Isak Yarow, said Ethiopian military planes have carried out airstrikes in Garasweyne village in an area where Ethiopian and al-Shabab fighters have clashed.

Ethiopia’s military has claimed the killing of three prominent al-Shabab figures including its propaganda chief, but the extremist group has denied it.

While Al-Shabab’s ultimate aims inside Ethiopia are yet to be determined, its new actions signal its “growing ambition, regional capabilities, and opportunism to exploit regional geopolitics, especially as the Abiy Ahmed government struggles to contain the various insurgencies inside Ethiopia,” security analysts Caleb Weiss and Ryan O’Farrell wrote late last month.



Security analyst Ismail Osman, a former deputy of Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency, told the AP that "President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's immediate priority is to eradicate al-Shabab" and warned that regional tensions could worsen amid this new instability.

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	08/04 Origins of Covid-19 more complicated
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/tracing-covid-pandemic-origins/">https://www.wired.com/story/tracing-covid-pandemic-origins/</a>
GIST	<p><b>IN OCTOBER 2014</b>, virologist Edward Holmes <a href="#">took a tour</a> of the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, a once relatively overlooked city of about 11 million people in the central Chinese province of Hubei. The market would have presented a bewildering environment for the uninitiated: rows of stalls selling unfamiliar creatures for food, both dead and alive; cages holding hog badgers and Siberian weasels, Malayan porcupines and masked palm civets. In the southwest corner of the market, Holmes found a stall selling raccoon dogs, stacked in a cage on top of another housing a species of bird he didn't recognize. He paused to take a photo.</p> <p>Eight years on, that photo is a key piece of evidence in the painstaking effort to trace the coronavirus pandemic back to its origins. Of course, it's been suspected since the early days of the pandemic—since before it was even a pandemic—that the Wuhan wet market played a role, but it's been difficult to prove it definitively. In the meantime, other origin theories have flowered centered on the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a biological research lab which, it's argued, accidentally or deliberately unleashed the virus on the city and the world.</p> <p>The overwhelming scientific consensus is that Covid originated in a similar way to related diseases such as SARS, which jumped from bats to humans via an intermediate animal. Figuring out exactly what happened with Covid-19 could prove immensely valuable both in terms of finally disproving the lab leak theory and by providing a source of information on how to stop the next pandemic. "This is not about placing blame," says Kristian Andersen, a professor of immunology and microbiology at the Scripps Research Institute in California. "This is about understanding in as much detail as we can the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic."</p> <p>For the last two years, an international team of scientists including Andersen and Holmes has been trying to pinpoint the epicenter of the pandemic, using methods ranging from genetic analysis to social media scraping. Their research, which attracted widespread coverage in preprint before being published in its final form last week, reads as much like a detective report as an academic study.</p> <p>First: the scene of the crime. Where exactly in this city of 11 million people did the virus first jump from animals to humans? To find out, the team—led by University of Arizona biologist Michael Worobey—scoured a report published by the World Health Organization in the summer of 2021, which was based on a joint investigation the public health body conducted with Chinese scientists. By cross-referencing the different maps and tables within the report, the researchers obtained coordinates for 155 of the earliest Covid cases in Wuhan, people who were hospitalized from the disease in December 2019.</p> <p>Most of those cases were clustered around central Wuhan, particularly on the west bank of the Yangtze river—the same area as the Huanan market. "There was this extraordinary pattern where the highest density of cases was both extremely near to and very centered on the market," says Worobey, lead author on the paper, which was published in <a href="#">Science</a>. Statistical analysis confirmed that it was "extremely unlikely" that the pattern of cases seen in the early days of the pandemic would have been so clustered on the market if Covid had originated anywhere else: A random selection of similar people from around Wuhan were very unlikely to have lived so close to the market.</p>

Even early patients who didn't work or shop at the market were more likely to live close to it. "This is an indication that the virus started spreading in people who worked at the market, but then started to spread into the local community, as vendors went to local shops, infected people who worked in those shops, and then local community members not linked to the market started getting infected," says Worobey.

But a high level of transmission centered on the market doesn't, in and of itself, imply that the entire outbreak started there. Snapshots from later in the pandemic might have found similar patterns centered on superspreader events in Italy or Seattle, for instance. To strengthen their case beyond the WHO data, the researchers turned to the Chinese microblogging service Weibo.

People who posted asking for help on a Covid-19 app within Weibo in January and February 2020 were clustered not around the market, but to the west, in more densely populated areas of the city, and in areas with more older people—hinting at how the pandemic began to shift from an isolated outbreak linked to the market to one with the potential to explode around the world. A few months in, it had started to mirror the population density of the city. Historical location-based "check-ins" on Weibo also show that the Huanan market was a relatively unlikely destination for most people in the city—in other words, it was unlikely to be the location of a superspreader event unless the virus originated from there.

To trace the pandemic in the other direction, toward its source, the researchers turned to swab samples collected by Chinese scientists from around the Huanan market just before it was shut down by the authorities in January 2020. Those swabs returned a cluster of positives in the south-western corner of the market—on a glove found on one of the stalls, from a grate under one of the cages. Five of the positive samples came from a single stall—a stall that was known to be selling live animals in late 2019, and the same stall where Holmes had taken his photograph of the raccoon dogs five years earlier.

This layering of indirect evidence has helped to settle the question of where Covid jumped into humans, but the question of timing has also been a subject of fierce debate. A [companion paper](#) explores this using Covid's molecular clock—what Joel Wertheim, a virologist at the University of California, San Diego and coauthor on the paper, calls "that steady drumbeat of mutations accumulating in SARS-CoV-2," or how the virus shifts over time.

It had been assumed that a virus jumping from animals into humans was a piece of cosmic bad luck—a one-off amplified by bad decisionmaking in the days and months that followed. But the genetic data tells a different story. There were actually two strains of Covid circulating in Wuhan in late 2019: Lineage A and Lineage B, which are just two letters apart in their genetic code, according to Jonathan Pekar, a researcher at UC San Diego and another of the study's coauthors.

As Pekar delved deeper into what scientists call the "phylogeny" of SARS-CoV-2—its family tree—it became clear that their understanding of how the disease had crossed over might be wrong. "We eventually figured out that it was better explained by multiple introductions than a single one," he says. The researchers now think Lineage A—which is more genetically similar to bat coronaviruses, and so appears earlier in the virus's family tree—was actually introduced into humans after Lineage B. Lineage B ended up becoming the dominant global variant: both persisted for a while, but Delta, Omicron, and the rest of the variants that swept the globe are descended from B, not A.

Pekar now thinks there were actually up to a dozen separate crossover events, because in order for a disease like Covid to "take"—to go beyond its initial human host and start an epidemic—it needs to infect someone who's going to spread it widely, and not everyone does. "Roughly 70 percent of introductions go extinct, so you need eight introductions to have two that persist," Pekar says.

It might seem unlikely that a once-in-a-generation event happened twice within the space of a couple of weeks, but actually, says Wertheim, once all the conditions were in place—a zoonotic virus capable of human infection in close proximity to humans—it would have been surprising if it had only happened once. The barriers to spillover had been lowered. "We failed to climb Mount Everest for thousands of years, and then in one day two people did," says Andersen.

The fact that the virus likely crossed over twice in quick succession is significant for two reasons: first, because multiple introductions damage the lab leak hypothesis—although like all conspiracy theories, it will likely contort itself into some new variant that hand-waves this away; and secondly, because it rules out Covid being introduced into the market from a human who caught it elsewhere. “This is so concordant with what we’ve seen with other epidemics that it makes any other scenario implausible, because you’d have to have an introduction of one virus and then we’d have to wait a week or two and have an introduction of another virus that is kind of similar but not the same,” Pekar says.

There’s been a narrative throughout the pandemic of Chinese obfuscation making matters worse—fueled by the same political tensions and mistrust that have made the lab leak theory so compelling to some. And while Chinese authorities undoubtedly made mistakes and obstructed access to information at times, it’s only the data collected by Chinese scientists that has made such detailed analysis of the origins of Covid possible at all. If, as these papers indicate, SARS-CoV-2 first crossed over in late November 2019, it took just a matter of weeks for doctors to figure out there was an epidemic, compared to several months for the 2014 Ebola outbreak and a year and a half for Zika. “The fact is we have an unprecedented view of the early picture of this pandemic compared to any pandemic in human history,” says Worobey. “There’s nothing like it.”

It means we have environmental sampling data that can place the spillover event precisely in the southwestern corner of the Huanan market, and genetic testing of virus samples from the first patients to give us a date: around November 18, 2019, for the introduction of Lineage B, with Lineage A following a week or so later. After that, though, the trail runs cold.

The researchers know which animals were being sold in the market in late 2019, and which ones were susceptible to coronaviruses, but they don’t have the smoking gun. “They don’t have samples from animals that had the virus. That’s what they’d like to have, and they’d like to be able to trace those animals back to the farms from which they came and see whether people in those farms had been exposed to the virus or viruses,” says Jonathan Stoye, a virologist at the Francis Crick Institute in the UK, who was not involved in the research.

That’s unlikely to be possible. There are theories on how infected animals may have reached the market: Wuhan is in Hubei province, and to the west of the region [there are caves](#) that are home to horseshoe bats, close to farms that once housed millions of raccoon dogs and civets. The most likely course of events is something like: A bat infected with a novel coronavirus flies over a farm where animals are being reared for meat. It poops, and viral particles infect one of the animals below, sparking an unseen wave of infections at the farm. Maybe the virus crosses over to the farmworkers but fizzles out because there’s not enough population density to sustain a human epidemic. Days or weeks later, in November 2019, some of the infected animals are shipped to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, where they’re sold at stalls in the southwestern corner. The virus crosses over to humans at least eight times, maybe more. The majority of those infections fizzle out without spreading to anyone else, but two take hold, start to spread. Not long after that, dozens of people in the area start to come down with a mysterious viral pneumonia.

But the animal or animals that carried coronavirus are almost certainly long dead: shipped off and sold for meat, or killed in one of the mass culls that took place in early 2020 as the Chinese authorities clamped down on the live animal trade. “It is very possible that we will never have that sample, that we may have missed our opportunity,” says Worobey.

But there are still leads to follow: tracing the supply chains for the stalls in the southwestern corner of Huanan market and finding out which farms supplied them; poring over the paperwork from the culls to find out where the animals from that farm were buried; exhuming the animals and sequencing their DNA to look for remnants of a coronavirus that looks almost identical to SARS-CoV-2.

It will need patient work and international cooperation in a difficult environment—but it could be the only way to stop the next pandemic. “These things are not impossible,” Worobey says. “So let’s look at all the options. Let’s connect every single possible dot that we can.”

HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Rise of billion-dollar disasters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2022/billion-dollar-disasters/?tid=hp-top-table-main-t-5">https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2022/billion-dollar-disasters/?tid=hp-top-table-main-t-5</a>
GIST	<p>CRUSO, N.C. — A year after the remnants of <a href="#">Tropical Storm Fred</a> dumped a foot of rain on parts of this mountain community, after the Pigeon River rose and raged and destroyed nearly everything in its path, the scars remain around every bend.</p> <p>Sherrie Lynn McArthur, owner of Laurel Bank Campground, is still surrounded by towering piles of mangled metal campers, appliances and other debris — a daily reminder of the catastrophe where four people perished in a flash flood that leveled a spot vacationers had flocked to for a half century.</p> <p>“Disasters happen,” she said on a recent evening as she surveyed the destruction. “But people don’t know that it lasts for more than a week or a month.”</p> <p>In this swath of western North Carolina, dozens of bridges were damaged and some wiped out altogether. Scores of homes were destroyed, and hundreds more left in disrepair. The state allocated nearly <a href="#">\$125 million</a> for recovery, including funds to help displaced families and compensate for lost crops. The federal government has spent millions more to help homeowners and renters, as well as area business owners and local cleanup efforts.</p> <p>Tropical Storm Fred and its aftermath became merely one of the <a href="#">20 “billion-dollar” weather and climate disasters</a> tracked by the U.S. government last year — a collection of <a href="#">calamities</a> that cost the nation an estimated \$145 billion and killed nearly 700 people.</p> <p>“They are not slowing down,” said Adam Smith, the U.S. government’s lead scientist for analyzing billion-dollar disasters.</p> <p>This mounting toll, which scientists and government officials say is driven in part because the world is warming, is forcing hard questions about who bears the burden of paying for them and how the nation can better prepare for what lies ahead. Ordinary Americans, often without adequate insurance, and local governments alike are ill-prepared for the sudden financial shocks such disasters can inflict. And elected leaders are scrambling to reinforce aging infrastructure built not only for a different century, but also for an earlier era of risks.</p> <p>While weather disasters strike the United States every year, the numbers show that summer is proving prone to some of the most costly annual disasters, including powerful hurricanes, seemingly endless droughts, sprawling wildfires and torrential rainstorms that fuel the sort of flooding St. Louis and eastern Kentucky <a href="#">have recently endured</a>.</p> <p>Over the past two years, for instance, the summer brought two catastrophic events — Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Laura — that together caused more than \$100 billion in damage and killed at least 138 people.</p> <p>During summer in particular, many communities have had to grapple with compound, or cascading, disasters that hit in rapid succession. For instance, parts of California have seen wildfires followed by heavy rain and mudslides. A heat wave that descended after Hurricane Ida had knocked out power last summer left <a href="#">already vulnerable residents</a> in Louisiana at more risk.</p> <p>Even as such threats rise, Americans continue to flock to vulnerable places.</p> <p><a href="#">According to the U.S. Census</a>, people have continued to move in droves to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, where seas are rising and hurricanes are intensifying. They have headed to California and other parts of the West, within reach of devastating wildfires.</p> <p>The unprecedented flooding that ravaged this verdant corner of the Blue Ridge Mountains last August barely registered on a national scale. But it underscored how even disasters that don’t wreak havoc across</p>

large geographic areas can inflict profound consequences long after they are gone. As such events happen more often, other vulnerable and unsuspecting communities are likely to face similar tragedies.

“Here’s the news flash: We’re not going to be the last small town that’s going to see far from a normal amount of flooding,” said Zeb Smathers, mayor of nearby Canton.

### **‘The 800-pound gorilla’**

A dozen miles from where the worst of the flooding took place in western North Carolina last summer, Smith has worked more than a decade as a scientist for NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information.

In the upstairs office at his home west of Asheville, an unmistakable pattern has unfolded in his spreadsheets.

“The frequency and the cost of U.S. weather and climate disasters is increasing,” said Smith, who [tracks disasters](#) back to 1980, using an array of public and private data on everything from insurance payouts to infrastructure damage, to estimate their economic impact.

The data bear out that reality.

The United States has experienced an average of 7.7 billion-dollar disasters annually over the past four decades, Smith said. But in the past five years, that average has jumped to nearly 18 events each year. 2020 and 2021 saw the highest number of such disasters on record, with 22 and 20, respectively.

That list includes a wide range of catastrophes that span the country and the calendar, including a cold snap that crippled parts of Texas and hailstorms in Ohio. Spring has been an especially active time, the numbers show. But many of the most destructive and costly disasters of recent years also have come during summer — including massive [Western wildfires](#), a [crippling heat dome in the Pacific Northwest](#) and devastating hurricanes such as Harvey, Maria and Ida.

“We’re starting to refer to the warm season as ‘danger season,’ because we’re seeing a lot of different kinds of climate hazards happening at the same time,” said Rachel Licker, principal climate scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Last year marked the seventh consecutive year in which the nation experienced 10 or more separate billion-dollar disasters. According to NOAA, the annual cost of such events has risen, with the 2010s proving “far costlier” than the several decades that preceded it.

There are numerous reasons that contribute to the troubling trend, according to researchers and public officials who have studied the changes, including ongoing development in disaster-prone areas and Americans’ push to live near the coasts.

But, Smith said, “Climate change is the 800-pound gorilla in the room.”

In places such as the Southeast, he said, a warming atmosphere means that the air holds more water vapor, fueling torrential rainstorms and more intense hurricanes that have led to catastrophic flooding. In the West, ongoing droughts have caused water shortages and created the conditions for megafires that burn across massive swaths of land.

“Climate change is enhancing some of the extremes that lead to billion-dollar disasters,” he said.

Smith wrote in a NOAA [analysis](#) earlier this year that climate change is “supercharging the [increasing frequency](#) and intensity of certain types of extreme weather that lead to billion-dollar disasters — most notably the rise in vulnerability to drought, lengthening wildfire seasons in the Western states, and the potential for extremely heavy rainfall becoming more common in the eastern states. Sea level rise is worsening hurricane [storm surge flooding](#).”



In a recent assessment of the current state of climate science, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [drew a similar conclusion](#). The panel wrote that as the planet grows warmer, more and potentially harsher events await.

“We will experience extreme events that are unprecedented, either in magnitude, frequency, timing or location,” IPCC authors wrote.

“The frequency of these unprecedented extreme events will rise with increasing global warming.”

### **‘It happened so quickly’**

Travis Donaldson, emergency services director for Haywood County, was monitoring the heavy rainfall in the area that August afternoon last summer. He saw the water level rising along the Pigeon River near Cruso and Canton, not long before the calls for help began.

“It happened so quickly,” Donaldson said, adding, “It was like somebody flipped a light switch, and every phone line in the 911 center lit up.”

More than 70 people in the county were reported missing in the hours after the storm. Donaldson said emergency responders made more than two dozen documented rescues during the flooding, in addition to others undertaken by neighbors and bystanders.

Ultimately, 161 people from 85 families in Haywood County required long-term shelter, a spokeswoman said. Officials have removed 85,000 cubic yards of debris, and counting.

Then there is the emotional wreckage that remains.

Donella Pressley fled with her two young daughters, Cordelia and Elena, and an armful of family pictures just before a branch of the swelling river engulfed her house off Pisgah Drive. The family was able to return after more than seven months and numerous temporary moves, but even with her flooded floors and walls replaced, she lives with constant unease.

“I’ve just tried to brace my children that we do live by the river, and it’s possible this could happen to us again,” she said.

Bill Martin, a state rebuild coordinator for a [Baptist organization](#) that aids communities in the wake of disasters, has overseen a group that has renovated or rebuilt 73 homes, with many more to go.

“Mentally, it affected everybody up through here. Financially, it affected everybody, some more than others,” he said one afternoon as he put finishing touches of paint on a house off Cruso Road for a couple whose previous home was swept away by the river.

### **‘We are not prepared’**

Adam Smith and others are quick to point out that while the warming climate has helped catalyze the rise in billion-dollar disasters, is it hardly the only factor.

“There’s no denying that the intensity of these disasters seems to be increasing, or the impacts seem to be increasing,” said William “Brock” Long, who headed the Federal Emergency Management Agency during the Trump administration. “But you can’t just say it’s climate change.”

He pointed to the fact that Americans have continued to flock to vulnerable areas such as coastlines, river floodplains and areas with greater wildfire risks.

The feverish growth of recent years, particularly in places where building codes are not always sufficient to account for the risk of extreme events, has put more lives and more assets in harm’s way.



“We’re all talking about climate change and how bad it’s going to be, but the incentives aren’t there for communities to do the right thing,” said Long, now the executive chairman of Hagerty Consulting, an emergency management consulting firm. “Nobody ever got elected” on a platform of more stringent building codes, he said.

In addition, Long said that a “financial lack of resilience” exists in many places around the country, where many homeowners are [uninsured or underinsured](#). It leaves them particularly vulnerable when disaster strikes.

“We’ve got some real social vulnerability issues we need to tackle,” Long said. “You’ve got a lack of insurance within the citizenry, a lack of insurance within our communities for public infrastructure. ... Until that changes, these disasters are going to get worse, and FEMA faces an impossible task.”

Threats still loom this summer. While scientists have predicted another active hurricane season, no major storms have yet hit U.S. coasts. Government officials also have forecast “[above normal](#)” potential for serious wildfires in the weeks and months ahead.

The accompanying risks, from overwhelmed electric grids to a lack of adequate cooling among certain populations, abound.

“We are not prepared right now. These disasters are increasing in frequency, and the nature of them is they are really dangerous and deadly events,” Licker said. “We’re not even prepared now, let alone for future conditions.”

And often, the impacts of extreme weather hit hardest among those who can least afford it.

“The most vulnerable populations are often those who pay the highest relative costs to recovering from disasters,” Smith said. “They just don’t have the financial safety net to recover and build back to where they were previous to the disaster.”

#### **‘It sure took a toll’**

Some of those vulnerabilities are painfully clear in the mountains of North Carolina a year after the catastrophic flooding that struck here on a summer afternoon.

Roads, bridges and other infrastructure were overwhelmed by the deluge. Local officials are eager for dollars and plans to make municipal buildings, homes and businesses more resilient to the next flood; their wish list includes everything from early-warning systems to more robust storm water drainage.

Nick Scheuer, the town manager of Canton, estimated the municipality sustained \$12 million to \$15 million in damage. Police, fire and other town officials continue to work out of temporary facilities.

The town’s annual budget comes to about \$11 million, he said, but “we spent close to \$4 million just in remediation of flood damage to our facilities, temporary offices and replacing basic equipment necessary for operation.”

Homeowners without insurance — or without adequate insurance — are struggling to rebuild, in some cases raising their foundations eight feet or more above the ground. After the last round of severe flooding in the area in 2004, some residents in the region sold their homes through government programs, which [aimed to create](#) a buffer near the river.

Now, more flood-prone properties could be eligible for buyouts. But for the moment, residents here say they have relied on a patchwork of aid from federal flood insurance, FEMA assistance, state disaster funding, relief from nonprofit groups and the kindness of friends and neighbors.

“We’re still in the picking-up-our-teeth phase of this,” said Smathers, the Canton mayor. But, he added, “It could happen again this year — that’s the thing. It could happen next week.”

These days, Martin lives in an RV nearby, working alongside colleagues to repair and rebuild what he can. “I can hardly explain the devastation,” he said, comparing the damage to what he once witnessed after a [powerful tornado struck](#) Moore, Okla. “It sure took a toll.”

At the Laurel Bank Campground, McArthur still fights back tears most days as she roams the debris-cluttered landscape.

“You’ve never seen such angry water,” she recalled, as she stood alongside the river that was flowing peacefully again, for now. She spoke of the campers [who lost their lives](#) in the flash floods, and how their loss haunts her.

“I live their memory every day.”

A few miles away, Donella Pressley’s daughters were giggling and playing on the bunk bed in their revamped bedroom. In the kitchen, standing by the new countertops that had been installed days before, Pressley looked out her window toward the river, only half a football field away.

“It’s a very uneasy feeling when it rains,” she said, describing how only weeks earlier, she briefly evacuated again when a downpour caused the rising waters to pool in her yard.

For now, she said, “We will live. And carry on.”

Still, she keeps suitcases packed under her bed and in her daughters’ room, so that they can flee quickly if the next disaster comes.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Candy industry warns Halloween shortages</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/4/candy-industry-warns-halloween-shortages-inflation/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/4/candy-industry-warns-halloween-shortages-inflation/</a>
GIST	<p>The candy industry is warning that chocoholics will pay more for their Snickers, Kit Kats and Hershey bars this Halloween as supply chain shortages lag behind a growing appetite for sweets that started during the pandemic.</p> <p>In their half-year reports last Thursday, Pennsylvania-based Hershey Co. and Switzerland-based Nestle said pandemic-driven global supply chain disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war have made cocoa and other ingredients scarcer and more expensive as demand soars.</p> <p>The maker of Nestle Crunch announced a 6.5% price increase to offset lower profit margins amid “significant and unprecedented cost inflation.” Nestle now expects an 8% increase in sales this year, higher than its previous 5% estimate.</p> <p>Hershey said it will be unable to produce enough seasonally-decorated Almond Joy, Reese’s Peanut Butter cups and other treats to keep up with shoppers at Halloween. Data from Refinitiv shows Hershey’s net sales rose more than 19% to \$2.37 billion in the quarter that ended July 3.</p> <p>Mars Wrigley did not respond to a request for comment. The Chicago-based confectioner revealed Monday that “ghoulish green” Snickers, Twix and M&amp;Ms will hit retail shelves later this month in time for Halloween.</p> <p>Ashleigh Pollart, a Hershey Co. spokeswoman, said Thursday that “all companies” in the industry are experiencing continued supply chain disruptions amid soaring demand.</p> <p>“These capacity constraints we referenced during [last] Thursday’s earnings call are due to a tremendous increase in consumer demand the past few years,” Ms. Pollart told The Washington Times in an email.</p>

Because Hershey's seasonal and everyday treats share the same production lines, she said the company decided in the spring "to focus on everyday products to improve on-shelf availability in both U.S. and Canada" rather than prioritize Halloween and Christmas items.

Multiple reports have shown an uptick in Americans seeking sugary solace since the first pandemic lockdowns in March 2020.

According to Information Resources, Inc., U.S. sales of chocolate, non-chocolate candy, gum and mints grew 11.3% year-over-year to hit \$30.3 billion during the 52 weeks that ended July 10. That included a 9.2% growth in chocolate sales and a 14% spike in non-chocolate sales.

During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 15 to Aug. 9, 2020, the National Confectioners Association reported a 3.8% increase in candy and chocolate sales over the same period in 2019.

According to the nonprofit trade group, chocolate and candy sales rose 11% from 2020 to 2021 — and Halloween sales are on track to be up 5% this year from 2021.

"People are very excited for the Halloween season, and they plan to incorporate chocolate and candy into their celebrations this fall," Lauren O'Toole Boland, a spokeswoman for the association, said in an email Thursday.

After last week's reports of a possible candy shortage this Halloween, some shoppers may not wait to see if store shelves remain stocked in October.

Ecommerce company Pattern reported Wednesday that Amazon searches for "Halloween candy" shot up 84% year-over-year from the last week of July 2021 to last week.

"As disrupted supply chains continue to create scarcity, a segment of American consumers has become increasingly savvy about making sure they aren't left without groceries and other staples," said Hamilton Noel, a data scientist at Pattern.

But Peter C. Earle, an economist at the free market American Institute for Economic Research in Massachusetts, said it's too early to panic.

Last month, Bank of America placed Hershey on its list of "recession-resistant" stocks because of Americans' steady appetite for sweets — and Mr. Earle noted that the company started its Snickers and Three Musketeers candy bars during the Great Depression.

"Even as prices rise owing to inflation, people are willing to pay higher prices for chocolate and candy. But the Halloween warning makes clear that 'recession-resistant' doesn't also mean 'supply-chain proof,'" he said in an email.

Other economists said government policies could affect how long the problem continues.

"The candy shortage is just a taste of what's to come," said Charles N. Steele, an economist who teaches at Hillsdale College. "I predict these kinds of problems will spread because of policies governments are imposing around the world. Most importantly, these include the push to eliminate fossil fuels and to eliminate fertilizers and pesticides. These constitute a war on modern agriculture."

Economist Warren L. Coats, a former member of the International Monetary Fund who lives in Maryland, said the industry will recover faster if the federal government leaves it alone.

"Perhaps there is something the government could do to remove barriers to a resolution," Mr. Coats said Thursday. "But no one has a stronger incentive to resolve the problem than the companies, because their profits depend on it."

HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Man scams boy's lemonade stand fake \$100</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/everett-pd-man-scammed-11-year-olds-lemonade-stand-with-fake-100-bill">https://www.q13fox.com/news/everett-pd-man-scammed-11-year-olds-lemonade-stand-with-fake-100-bill</a>
GIST	<p><b>EVERETT, Wash.</b> - Police are searching for man who took advantage of an 11-year-old running a lemonade stand by handing him a fake \$100 bill for a drink and asking for exact change.</p> <p>According to the <a href="#">Everett</a> Police Department (EPD), the incident happened sometime over the summer on Beverly Blvd. The suspect handed 11-year-old Jeremy a counterfeit bill, and received a drink and \$85 in change.</p> <p>According to the EPD's <a href="#">Facebook post</a>, Jeremy spent his own allowance money to set up this lemonade stand, and he ended up using what allowance he had left to give the suspect his change.</p> <p>"While our detectives work hard to bring closure to every case, this case struck a particular chord with them, and they want to do everything they can to get justice for Jeremy and catch this counterfeiter," The EPD wrote on Facebook.</p> <p>Police are asking anyone with information on this suspect to call their tip line at 425-257-8450, or message them on their <a href="#">Facebook page</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Study: long Covid affects 1-in-8</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-au/health/medical/long-covid-symptoms-affects-one-in-eight-study-suggests/ar-AA10jRhi">https://www.msn.com/en-au/health/medical/long-covid-symptoms-affects-one-in-eight-study-suggests/ar-AA10jRhi</a>
GIST	<p>One in eight people who get coronavirus develop at least one symptom of long Covid, one of the most comprehensive studies on the condition to date suggested on Thursday.</p> <p>With more than half a billion coronavirus cases recorded worldwide since the start of the pandemic, there has been rising concern about the lasting symptoms seen in people with long Covid.</p> <p>However almost none of the existing research has compared long Covid sufferers with people who have never been infected, making it possible that some of the health problems were not caused by the virus.</p> <p>A new study published in The Lancet journal asked more than 76,400 adults in the Netherlands to fill out an online questionnaire on 23 common long Covid symptoms.</p> <p>Between March 2020 and August 2021, each participant filled out the questionnaire 24 times.</p> <p>During that period, more than 4,200 of them -- 5.5 percent -- reported catching Covid.</p> <p>Of those with Covid, over 21 percent had at least one new or severely increased symptom three to five months after becoming infected.</p> <p>However nearly nine percent of a control group which did not have Covid reported a similar increase.</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Arrest: threat to shoot Seattle PD officers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/man-arrested-after-threatening-shoot-police-officers-seattles-torchlight-parade/JPWN6XRTIVG2PNMF7LRG4J5BR4/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/man-arrested-after-threatening-shoot-police-officers-seattles-torchlight-parade/JPWN6XRTIVG2PNMF7LRG4J5BR4/</a>

GIST	<p>A SeaTac man is being accused of felony harassment after he threatened to shoot several Seattle police officers during last Saturday's Torchlight Parade, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's office announced.</p> <p>According to court documents, numerous Seattle police officers were working the Torchlight Parade in downtown Seattle on Saturday when they were called to a disturbance near Fourth Avenue and Olive Way.</p> <p>One of the officers was approached by a person who said the suspect was being "ignorant and had too much to drink," according to charging documents.</p> <p>As officers approached the suspect, they saw him yelling at his niece, at one point saying, "I don't care who is around," and later shouting, "I'll shoot any one of these (expletives)."</p> <p>The man then pointed at all uniformed officers in the vicinity and reached into his waistband, according to charging documents. Several officers grabbed his arms before he could potentially access a gun.</p> <p>One of the officers spoke with the man's niece, who told the officer that she had a loaded gun in her purse. According to charging documents, "the defendant had immediate access to the firearm while making his threats to officers."</p> <p>The man's niece gave officers permission to remove the gun from her purse during the interview. She denied any physical abuse from the suspect and was released from the scene.</p> <p>Documents state that the man's criminal history includes felony convictions for threats to bomb/injure property (2002), first-degree burglary (2004), felony harassment (2006), residential burglary (2010), felony domestic violence violation of a protection order (2018), and third-degree domestic violence with substantial pain (2020).</p> <p>The man also has eight misdemeanor convictions between 2002 and 2018.</p> <p>The state requested the man's bail be set at \$5,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 WA counties send most people to prison?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://crosscut.com/news/2022/08/new-report-tracks-which-wa-counties-send-most-people-prison">https://crosscut.com/news/2022/08/new-report-tracks-which-wa-counties-send-most-people-prison</a>
GIST	<p>If you live in a poor neighborhood in Washington state, your chances of ending up behind bars increase dramatically.</p> <p>But it's not just the big cities in Washington contributing to mass incarceration. In fact, some of the state's least populated counties send people to prison at the highest rates.</p> <p>Those are the findings from a new report called "<a href="#">Where people in prison come from: The geography of mass incarceration in Washington</a>," released Aug. 3 from the Prison Policy Initiative, a national nonprofit that works to expose the impacts of mass incarceration.</p> <p>"The high imprisonment rates in these less populous counties means that the idea that incarceration is a problem uniquely experienced in cities is a myth," the report says.</p> <p>Thanks to a 2019 redistricting reform law that ended "prison gerrymandering" in Washington, incarcerated people are now counted as part of the legislative district they call home — <i>not</i> as a resident of their prison cell. That allowed the Prison Policy Initiative to analyze where incarcerated people in Washington come from.</p> <p>The new analysis looked at imprisonment rates — essentially, the number of people in prison from that place per 100,000 people — by <a href="#">county</a>, <a href="#">city</a>, <a href="#">zip code</a> and several other parameters. It found that among</p>

larger cities in Washington, Tacoma easily has the highest imprisonment rate. In Tacoma, 612 residents are in a Washington prison per 100,000 people — a rate seven times higher than the state average. People from Tacoma make up 9% of all people in Washington state prisons. The report's authors note that Tacoma has a higher percentage of Black people than the rest of the state and that Black people are arrested at disproportionate rates compared to other demographics.

The New Tacoma neighborhood has a staggering imprisonment rate of 2,854 per 100,000 people — more than four times higher than the overall city rate. New Tacoma encompasses the unofficial Hilltop neighborhood, which once gained a reputation for its gang activity.

"I think it really just shows that zip codes do dictate life outcomes," said Ali Hohman, director of legal services for the Washington Defender Association.

Hohman added that the report reveals excessive policing and prosecution in places like the Hilltop neighborhood. She attributed at least part of the disparities in imprisonment rates across counties to prosecutorial styles.

While the largest cities account for the largest chunk of people in prison, many less populous counties actually had higher rates of incarceration than the most populated counties. The county with the highest imprisonment rate, for example, is Grays Harbor, located at the far western side of the state with a total population of around 75,000 people. The next highest imprisonment rates are Cowlitz and Lewis counties, both of which are located in Southwest Washington between Vancouver and Olympia.

Norma Tillotson, who became Grays Harbor's prosecutor last year, said she's surprised that her county's imprisonment rate is so high.

"I don't have any kind of answers as to why that number would be what it is," Tillotson said.

There are 3,072 people from King County in Washington prisons, but King County actually has among the lowest rates in the state at 135 imprisoned people per 100,000 county residents. For comparison, Grays Harbor's rate was 3.5 times higher — with 470 prisoners per 100,000 residents.

The report doesn't attempt to answer why certain areas may have more people in prison than others. But it clearly suggests a link between poverty and the criminal justice system. For example, Spokane's imprisonment rate as a city is 409 per 100,000 people, but zoom in closer and the areas with the highest rates are also low-income neighborhoods. West Central, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Spokane, has an imprisonment rate of 1,778 people per 100,000. In the more affluent Cannon Hill neighborhood, however, the rate was only 40 per 100,000.

The report is part of a series from the Prison Policy Initiative focusing on Washington and 12 other states, all of which count incarcerated people at home for redistricting purposes.

Since the report uses data from 2020, criminal justice trends related to the pandemic are not reflected. It also does not reflect cleared drug convictions due to the state Supreme Court's Blake decision in 2021, which found that the state's drug possession law was unconstitutional.

Mike Wessler, spokesperson for the Prison Policy Initiative, said that based on the organization's analyses elsewhere, the patterns in incarceration haven't changed much since the pandemic.

"Everything we've seen has indicated that there haven't been a lot of deliberate changes to how many people are put behind bars," Wessler said.

Those patterns aren't specific to Washington. Data from other states have revealed that less populated areas send people to prison at high rates and that there are disparities correlating with poverty, he said. The Prison Policy Initiative hopes the data can be used as a tool for further research.



	<p>“We think this data exposes a lot of truths about the criminal legal system,” he said. “We’re hopeful folks will take it to the next level.”</p> <p>Hohman, with the Washington Defender Association, said she’s eager to see more research based on this report.</p> <p>“I think the potential goes as high as the sky,” Hohman said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Court-ordered victim fees not enforced?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/08/04/federal-prisons-money-victims/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/08/04/federal-prisons-money-victims/</a>
GIST	<p>The Federal Bureau of Prisons has been pushing back against efforts to make inmates pay much more of their court-ordered restitution to crime victims, in part because the money they would use helps fund salary and benefits for hundreds of agency staff positions, documents and interviews show.</p> <p>Federal prisoner spending generates more than \$80 million a year for the agency — mostly from profits on items like commissary purchases and phone calls, according to the <a href="#">Federal Bureau of Prisons’ response to a public records request</a>. Those documents also show that the agency earns interest from some accounts.</p> <p>In Justice Department discussions last month, senior prison officials argued that the agency should not dramatically increase the amount of prisoner money turned over to victims, according to people familiar with the internal deliberations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the conversations. Any sharp uptick, the people described officials saying, would cut into a vital income stream at a time when the agency is already understaffed.</p> <p>Jack Donson, a retired Bureau of Prisons case manager coordinator who now consults on the federal prison system, said the issue highlights a “dysfunctional” culture at the prison bureau, with officials focused on preserving the flow of money through commissary accounts — known within the agency as the Trust Fund.</p> <p>“At meetings, staffers often referred to the Trust Fund as a ‘slush fund,’ so I have always been suspicious of it,” Donson said.</p> <p>Over the last year, The Washington Post revealed that some high-profile inmates, including Boston marathon bomber <a href="#">Dzhokhar Tsarnaev</a> and former <a href="#">USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar</a>, had sizable prison account balances yet paid very little of what they owed to their victims. Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco issued a directive to study the issue and make changes to the program.</p> <p>How, or if, the Justice Department decides to set new rules could affect another high-profile inmate: R&amp;B singer R. Kelly, who was <a href="#">sentenced in June to 30 years in prison</a> for sex trafficking. Kelly has nearly \$28,000 in his prison account, according to multiple people familiar with the case, and owes \$140,000 in court-ordered fines, including a \$40,000 penalty for a fund for human-trafficking victims, according to court records. On Thursday, after this story published online, federal prosecutors filed court papers seeking to take the money in Kelly’s account.</p> <p>Kelly’s lawyer, Jennifer Bonjean, said it was unethical for anyone at the Bureau of Prisons to share Kelly’s data and noted there was already an investigation into how other details of Kelly’s life behind bars had been leaked.</p> <p>“My client has an appeal pending, and until the Second Circuit affirms his conviction, nobody should be touching any of his money,” Bonjean said. She said she did not know Kelly’s account balance, but “neither the BOP nor any entity should have anything to say about whatever money he has in his commissary account.”</p> <p>The controversy over inmate funds centers on two separate but related pools of money. The first are deposit accounts, in which the nation’s nearly 140,000 federal inmates can keep an unlimited amount of</p>

money. These accounts are not subject to many of the regulations and scrutiny of regular bank accounts, because the agency does not consider itself a bank. The total amount of money in the deposit accounts ballooned from \$86 million to more than \$140 million in 2021, in large part because prisoners received coronavirus stimulus payments, people familiar with the matter said.

The second pool of money is the commissary accounts, or Trust Fund — a means for inmates to buy things, like phone or email access, sodas and candy, with money from their deposit funds.

The Bureau of Prisons, according to documents provided in response to a public records request, makes interest off the Trust Fund, though the amount can vary wildly; last year the agency made \$29,526, but two years earlier the fund generated more than \$1.3 million in interest.

The Trust Fund also operates as a kind of business, using the significant markups it charges inmates on purchases to pay for agency staff. Last year, the Trust Fund paid \$82 million to fund 652 positions at the Bureau of Prisons — \$49.5 million in salaries and \$32.5 million in benefits, according to agency records.

In a written statement, the agency drew a sharp line between the two pools of money, insisting the inmate deposit fund does not profit off inmates' money, while not acknowledging that the Trust Fund money generates tens of millions of dollars a year that is used for salaries and benefits.

The agency said that "all inmate deposits are held in trust by the Bureau of Prisons in non-interest bearing U.S. Treasury accounts and remain there unless the funds are withdrawn by the inmate or the inmate is released. Since the funds are held in trust, the BOP does not invest or derive any kind of income from the funds in these accounts."

Separately, through the public records request, the agency acknowledged that the commissary money — the Trust Fund — does earn interest for the Bureau of Prisons.

For years, the Bureau of Prisons has argued that whatever balance inmates may have in their accounts, they should only be required to pay \$25 every three months — just over \$8 a month — to any court-ordered victim restitution.

In early July, as Monaco's office considered how much to increase what inmates have to pay toward court judgments, senior Bureau of Prisons officials asserted that no more than 25 percent of an inmate's prison account should be taken, people familiar with the conversations said. The officials noted that reducing the amount of money in the accounts could also reduce the amount in the Trust Fund, thus cutting into the agency's revenue, these people said.

Under the 25 percent limit, Kelly, for example, would have to turn over about \$7,000 from his prison account, while he would keep about \$21,000.

The agency's proposal was met with resistance from other parts of the Justice Department, according to people familiar with the debate, which is ongoing. Officials are now considering an option in which the maximum amount taken from a prisoner to pay court orders would range from 25 to 75 percent, depending on the overall account balance.

Prosecutors and other law enforcement officials have been pushing to fix what they see as a glaring, unjust contradiction in the current system: The Bureau of Prisons zealously guards the money of convicted criminals who have been ordered by other parts of the government to make payments to their victims.

Prisoners are allowed to spend only about \$400 a month through the commissary system, yet some keep thousands in their accounts. More than 20 inmates had prison account balances of more than \$100,000 each, The Post reported last year. It can be difficult for convicts to get a traditional bank account.

Critics of the Bureau of Prisons system say the agency's accounts often shield money that should go to court-ordered restitution or child support. Under the current rules, prosecutors have to ask a federal judge to order the agency to turn over significant amounts.

Jason Wojdylo, a retired U.S. Marshals official, tried in vain for years to persuade the Bureau of Prisons to change its practices, which he said fail crime victims. Wojdylo filed the public records request that showed how many positions the bureau pays for using revenue generated by inmate money, and the dollar amount involved.

"It is a gross conflict for BOP to put its own interests before those of victims and children," Wojdylo said in an interview.

Lawmakers have also begun pressing the Justice Department to change the system.

"BOP has a responsibility to make sure inmates are making good on their judgments owed ... victim restitution, child support and the like," Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa) said this week after being told of The Post's findings. "These important judgments should not go ignored while BOP is taking a cut from inmates buying snacks at the commissary."

In the Tsarnaev and Nassar cases, prosecutors eventually filed court papers seeking a judge's order to force the agency to turn over funds to cover larger payments. Before they did so, Nassar spent more than \$10,000 from his prison account on other purchases, according to a court filing, while paying victims about \$100 a year. He had been ordered to pay tens of thousands in restitution.

Federal inmate accounts are not subject to the same criminal and regulatory scrutiny as bank accounts of non-incarcerated people. Although the Bureau of Prisons operates accounts for inmates and issues checks and money transfers from those accounts on their behalf, the agency does not consider itself a financial institution. Nor does it run bank transactions through a Treasury Department screening program meant to flag outstanding debts, officials said.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Former Puerto Rico governor arrested</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/us/puerto-rico-wanda-vasquez-arrest.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/us/puerto-rico-wanda-vasquez-arrest.html</a>
GIST	<p>A former governor of Puerto Rico, Wanda Vázquez, was arrested by the F.B.I. on Thursday and accused of accepting bribes from a campaign donor while in office and naming a regulatory official of his choosing in exchange for financing her campaign.</p> <p>Ms. Vázquez, 62, was arrested at her home after a grand jury indicted her.</p> <p>The donor, Julio M. Herrera Velutini — a Venezuelan banker who has been mired in regulatory problems in Puerto Rico — was also charged. Mr. Herrera, 50, owns Bancrédito, an international bank that faced scrutiny from Puerto Rico regulators over suspicious banking transactions.</p> <p>According to the Department of Justice, Mr. Herrera wanted the island's top banking regulator to be replaced, and in return offered to pay \$300,000 to political consultants working on the governor's campaign. Ms. Vázquez, who was facing re-election at the time, agreed to the plan, W. Stephen Muldrow, the United States Attorney for Puerto Rico, said, adding that Mr. Herrera then formed a political action committee for Ms. Vázquez.</p> <p>The grand jury's 42-page indictment details meetings and text messages purported to show the quid-pro-quo nature of the arrangement. The governor went through with her end of the bargain, forcing the incumbent banking commissioner to step down and installing Mr. Herrera's choice as the new commissioner, according to the indictment.</p>

To disguise the “illegal and corrupt purpose of the bribes,” Mr. Herrera’s payments were funneled through Mark T. Rossini, who served as a consultant to Mr. Herrera and is accused of facilitating the arrangement, the Justice Department said.

Mr. Rossini, 60, is a former F.B.I. supervisory agent who, before the Sept. 11 attacks, was assigned to a C.I.A. task force investigating Al Qaeda, but was criminally charged for illegally running unauthorized searches on a government computer. After pleading guilty to those charges, he paid a fine and served community service and a year of probation.

The former governor, the banker and the former federal agent were each charged with conspiracy, federal programs bribery, and honest services wire fraud, and could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted, Mr. Muldrow said.

Two more people involved in the bribery scheme — the president of the bank and one of Ms. Vázquez’s campaign consultants — pleaded guilty to conspiracy and will each face up to five years in prison.

Ms. Vázquez spoke to reporters on Thursday outside the federal courthouse in San Juan, where she was released on \$50,000 bond. Usually stylishly put together when in public, Ms. Vázquez looked like someone who had been roused out of bed.

“I reiterate to the people and to all of you: I am innocent,” Ms. Vázquez said. “I have not committed any crime or any irregularity. Now it’s up to me to defend myself. I assure you they have committed a great injustice against me.”

Her lawyer, Luis Plaza, noted that she was not accused of personally receiving any bribe money.

“Not even the indictment alleges that she was enriched one cent,” Mr. Plaza said.

The arrest of the former governor coincides with a wave of unrelated public corruption cases on the island, including the arrests of nine mayors so far this year.

Ms. Vázquez was the commonwealth’s top prosecutor in 2019 when mass protests swept Gov. Ricardo A. Rosselló out of office. The island has no lieutenant governor, and the first office in the line of succession, secretary of state, was vacant at the time, so Mr. Rosselló’s resignation unexpectedly catapulted Ms. Vázquez into the governorship. A Republican and member of the island’s pro-statehood party, she served for less than two years, completing Mr. Rosselló’s term but losing her bid for re-election when she was defeated in a primary in 2020.

Federal prosecutors said that when Ms. Vázquez lost the primary, Mr. Herrera tried offering a bribe to the winner — the current governor, Pedro R. Pierluisi. But the person representing Mr. Pierluisi in the scheme was actually working undercover for the F.B.I.

In May, Ms. Vázquez assembled reporters at the office of her lawyer, Mr. Plaza, to announce that she was under investigation. He described the investigation then as a “technical” issue that they would fight in court.

“We are going to litigate it, and we are going to win,” Mr. Plaza, a former prosecutor, said in May.

In November 2018, when she was the island’s secretary of justice, Ms. Vázquez faced allegations that she had improperly intervened on behalf of her daughter and son-in-law in a case involving a theft from their residence. Ms. Vázquez was briefly suspended from her post as the investigation developed. But she was later cleared of any ethical violations in the case by a judge who said there was insufficient evidence against her.

Before she was the top prosecutor, Ms. Vázquez led Puerto Rico's office of women's affairs, where she often clashed with women's advocacy groups who said she was not doing enough to combat domestic violence.

On Thursday, federal prosecutors said that Mr. Herrera was in London and Mr. Rossini was in Spain, and that efforts would be made to extradite them.

Attempts to reach to reach Mr. Rossini for comment were unsuccessful.

Luis Delgado, a lawyer for Mr. Herrera, said his client denied the allegations detailed in the indictment.

"They were false. There were no campaign contributions as they allege," Mr. Delgado said. "We look forward to addressing them in a court of law."

The bank that Mr. Herrera owns released a statement saying that he had resigned as chairman and a member of the board of directors.

"The bank continues to operate normally and to work closely and collaboratively with the Puerto Rico and federal banking authorities," Gregorio D'Andrea, the chief operating officer, said in a statement.

Corey R. Amundson, chief of the Department of Justice's Public Integrity Section, said the case was one of a string of recent corruption cases around the country, including in Ohio, Illinois and North Carolina, that involve businesspeople.

"We cannot and we will not turn a blind eye to a critical role played by corrupt members of the business world who make this corruption possible and provide the opportunities," he said at a news conference in San Juan on Thursday. "They must be held accountable and will be held accountable."

Governor Pierluisi said on Thursday that the arrest of his predecessor showed that "nobody is above the law in Puerto Rico."

Although Mr. Muldrow repeatedly stressed that the current governor is not accused of any crimes, Mr. Pierluisi's campaign has faced its own legal troubles.

The president and treasurer of a political action committee that raised money for Mr. Pierluisi's campaign pleaded guilty in May in a scheme to hide the origins of "dark money," the U.S. attorney's office said. The governor has denied any links to the PAC.

Another former governor of Puerto Rico, Aníbal Acevedo Vilá, was acquitted of federal corruption charges in 2009.

"Corruption is not a victimless crime," said Joseph González, the special agent in charge of the F.B.I. in Puerto Rico. "The victim is the people of Puerto Rico."

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 South King Co. mayors: need help on crime</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/south-king-county-mayors-fight-against-crime-help/281-c85b9581-e8de-4610-8a49-2deec9038a05">https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/south-king-county-mayors-fight-against-crime-help/281-c85b9581-e8de-4610-8a49-2deec9038a05</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — Mayors in south King County signed an open letter Thursday, asking for help in the effort to reduce crime and violence.</p> <p>However, at least one of the claims they made is receiving pushback from county leadership.</p> <p>Mayors in Auburn, Black Diamond, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Kent, Pacific, Renton and Tukwila are pleading for help from King County and the state as those cities see a "disturbing" rise in crime.</p>

"We really need to provide a higher level of public safety. Our community is demanding it," said Renton Mayor Armondo Pavone.

Four of the mayors who signed the public plea told KING 5 it was important for them to band together for people who live in various cities in south King County.

"Nobody knows where one city begins, and another ends. Nobody cares, they just want to feel safe," Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus said.

According to the letter, the rise in crime coincides with several events, including the passage of [Senate Bill 5476](#), which prevents cities and counties from charging someone with drug possession in certain cases. The passage of [House Bill 1054](#), which prevents police officers from conducting vehicle pursuits in certain circumstances is also a factor, according to the letter.

Federal Way Mayor Jim Ferrell, who is running for King County prosecutor this November, said many criminals know they can get away with it.

"I mean that's why car thefts statewide have gone up [88 percent](#) in one year," Ferrell said.

Along with citing an "influx" in methamphetamine and fentanyl, the letter criticizes the justice system, "in which it takes many months, if not years, for criminal charges to be filed, resolved, or tried."

There is also a need "for improved and timely juvenile and adult felony criminal accountability at the county level," the letter states.

The letter specifically calls out the King County Jail system, alleging it does not allow for booking of felony suspects on a routine basis and that due to limitations on bookings, officers spend house transporting and booking suspects.

Kent Mayor Dana Ralph pointed to the Norm Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, which is no longer taking in regular felony bookings due to staffing shortages, according to Ralph. Instead, the letter said officers are forced to take felony suspects to the jail in Seattle.

"The biggest problem is when you take an officer off the streets for four hours, in a department that is already significantly understaffed, it becomes a public safety issue.

In a statement, Chase Gallagher, director of communications for Constantine's office, called the assertion regarding jail bookings "hyperbole."

"Over the course of a single Sunday night in July, bookings were limited to only the highest priority cases so limited jail staff could prioritize safe operations in the jail," the statement reads. "When that one-time limitation went into effect, jail staff continued to field calls from law enforcement and allowed them to bring in high priority cases in if needed, and in fact at least one jurisdiction did so."

Though the concerned city leaders have had meetings with King County and state legislators to help solve the issues, the "consequences of the challenges to our system are real and immediate," the letter states.

The letter asks the county and state to take action to address the toll the increased crime is taking on the communities.

KING 5 reached out to Governor Jay Inslee's Office and the office of King County Executive Dow Constantine.

**Reponses from Governor's Office, King County executive**



A spokesperson from Inslee's office said they had not received the letter prior to KING 5's inquiry, as it was not specifically addressed to that office. The letter was still being reviewed on Thursday afternoon.

On the topic in general, however, a spokesperson for Inslee's office wrote the problem "is not unique to us."

"It's a phenomenon happening nationwide. As the Brennan Center for Justice says, 'The recent rise in crime is extraordinarily complex. Policymakers and the public should not jump to conclusions or expect easy answers,'" the statement reads.

It continues:

*"Solving the challenges facing our law enforcement and criminal justice system requires collaboration between partners at the federal, state, county and municipal level. The state will continue its part by listening to local partners to promote safety and share resources that address the root causes of violence and crime.*

*"Last month, the governor unveiled a proposal to increase police training opportunities statewide to make more candidates available for open officer positions in local departments. Since 2016, the state has increased pay for state troopers by 40%. The state has made significant investments in behavioral health services, rapid supportive housing, intervention programs for youth, and diversion programs for first-time and low-level offenders.*

*"We all share a desire for communities that are safe."*

The full statement from Constantine's office reads as follows:

*"It is incumbent on officials in positions of public trust to rely on facts, not hyperbole as is the case with this assertion regarding jail bookings. Over the course of a single Sunday night in July, bookings were limited to only the highest priority cases so limited jail staff could prioritize safe operations in the jail. When that one-time limitation went into effect, jail staff continued to field calls from law enforcement and allowed them to bring in high priority cases in if needed, and in fact at least one jurisdiction did so.*

*"Public safety is at the top of our priorities, and that means holding people accountable while also addressing underlying causes. Every level of government has a role to play in solving the issues in our streets, which have been exacerbated by a criminal court backlog created by the pandemic, decades of an underfunded behavioral health system, and centuries of institutional racism. We will continue to partner with any government committed to working productively to deliver safety rather than clinging to obsolete practices and mindsets that no longer keep our communities safe."*

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Gun trafficking surges across state lines</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/gun-trafficking-state-laws-11659539201?mod=hp_lead_pos10">https://www.wsj.com/articles/gun-trafficking-state-laws-11659539201?mod=hp_lead_pos10</a>
GIST	<p>The tan-and-black pistol sat inside a stack of tires at the end of an alleyway, dropped there, police said, by a teenage gunman as he ran from the scene.</p> <p>Around the corner, 17-year-old Alissa King, a popular youth basketball star, lay on the Boston pavement, dying from a gunshot wound to the neck. Five spent casings from the 9mm pistol littered the street around her that spring afternoon, April 15, 2020.</p> <p>Five months earlier, a factory worker looking to make some extra cash had walked into a pawnshop next to a fried fish restaurant in Tuscaloosa, Ala. He bought three pistols for a group of men trafficking guns up the East Coast. One of the guns was the tan-and-black Taurus G2C that would be used to shoot Ms. King.</p> <p>Amid the rise in homicides across both <a href="#">urban</a> and <a href="#">rural communities</a>, traffickers are bringing a growing percentage of firearms from states with loose gun laws into states with tighter restrictions, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of federal data going back a decade from 2020.</p>

In Massachusetts, which has some of the nation's strictest firearms laws, 79% of guns traced by police in criminal investigations came from out of state in 2020, compared with 63% in 2015, according to data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. California, which also has stringent firearms rules, saw a jump to 45% from 30% over the same period.

As disparities between local gun laws widen, the surge in guns trafficked between states is being fueled by schemes involving straw buyers, according to law enforcement. The crime is simple, but difficult to thwart: People who can clear a background check and are willing to do a quick job for a little money buy the guns for traffickers. The traffickers pay them and drive the weapons across state lines. They then sell them to gang members, people barred from owning firearms and others who want to avoid background checks in places where it is harder to buy guns.

People purchasing guns must fill out a form affirming that they are buying the firearm for themselves. Straw purchasers caught lying typically get probation. Traffickers convicted of dealing guns without a license or selling to prohibited people usually receive prison time, but often not more than a couple of years.

Measures [signed in June](#) by President Biden after the Uvalde, Texas, school shooting include tougher penalties of 15 years in prison for straw purchasers and gun traffickers. Attorney General Merrick Garland said at a recent news conference that teams of federal agents formed last year to stymie gun trafficking were making progress.

Such efforts are unlikely to stop the deluge of guns moving from state to state, law-enforcement officials and prosecutors say, so long as demand exists and regulations vary significantly.

The flow of firearms has grown along with the recent rise in murders in the U.S. Gun homicides in 2020 [rose to their highest levels](#) in 26 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The increase continued in 2021, based on preliminary data, according to CDC officials.

A sheriff's deputy in Sacramento, Calif., was killed last year with a Glock pistol trafficked from Arizona, the leading source for out-of-state guns in California, federal prosecutors say.

After one person was killed and seven wounded in a shooting at a party in Chicago last March, police found five handguns at the scene that had been trafficked into the city from the Clarksville, Tenn., area. Prosecutors say they were among at least 90 firearms purchased and brought to Chicago by three Army soldiers stationed along the Kentucky-Tennessee border. The soldiers have pleaded not guilty.

A 21-year-old college student was killed in Washington, D.C., last year with a handgun purchased at a Virginia gun store 48 hours earlier by a woman who had bought it for an acquaintance. The woman told an ATF agent she had needed money because her car had broken down.

The gun used to kill Alissa King—serial number TMB41870—began its journey some 1,200 miles away from where she died.

### **Out of Alabama**

Alongside the gold necklaces, electronics and lawn equipment that Wade's Jewelry & Pawn sells is an extensive array of guns, including AR-15s, shotguns and low-priced pistols.

From November 2019 through March 2020, a man named Demarcus Walker purchased 30 handguns from Wade's, according to court filings.

Mr. Walker, 25, grew up about an hour away in Uniontown. With mounting child-support payments, Mr. Walker needed extra money, according to court documents and his interviews with law enforcement. He told investigators he agreed to help out a group of men from his hometown.

The group, led by Freddie Ward, a 23-year-old former Uniontown high-school football standout, and another man who had moved to Massachusetts, devised a plan to take guns to Boston and sell them for a sizable markup, authorities said. But the person they were using to buy the guns in Tuscaloosa backed out.

That person introduced Mr. Walker to the group, according to a federal agent. They offered to pay him \$25 to \$50 for each gun he purchased for them.

Attorneys for Mr. Walker and Mr. Ward declined to comment on the case.

Massachusetts has among the toughest gun laws in the country, requiring anyone buying a gun to have a license that can take weeks to obtain, along with an expansive background check system.

Alabama has some of the loosest. No licenses are required to buy guns and there are no waiting periods.

One of the men involved in the trafficking operation said that the group knew “it is easy to buy a gun in Alabama, as opposed to Massachusetts,” according to court filings.

In 2020, 1,043 of the 1,324 guns traced in criminal investigations in Massachusetts came from other states, according to the ATF.

Nearly 90% of 76 guns traced to shootings in Boston in 2021 were bought outside of Massachusetts, according to the Suffolk County District Attorney’s office.

“To say it’s frustrating is an understatement,” said Suffolk County District Attorney Kevin Hayden, who launched an effort this year with local law enforcement and the ATF’s national gun tracing system to curb gun trafficking.

On the West Coast, more than 5,000 guns traced in criminal investigations in California came from Arizona and Nevada in 2020, double the number from 2015.

Mr. Walker, who had no criminal record, first bought two handguns at Wade’s on Nov. 14, 2019 after receiving a shopping list over Facebook Messenger from Mr. Ward, according to investigators. Four days later, he filled another order, buying three guns at Wade’s for \$571.97. One of them was the tan-and-black Taurus, brand new and still in the box, for \$199.

To get the guns to Boston, Mr. Ward sometimes used rental cars, law-enforcement officials suspect, or took a Greyhound bus, placing a suitcase stuffed with firearms in the luggage compartment.

Investigators aren’t certain how the group sold their firearms once they reached Massachusetts.

Guns trafficked into cities like Boston can be sold for twice the purchase price. In one recent case, a \$500 gun bought in Alabama was sold for \$1,300 in Chicago before it was used in a homicide there, according to federal authorities.

Sometime after Mr. Walker’s Nov. 18 purchases, the guns from Alabama disappeared into the Boston streets, including the Taurus.

#### **ATF alert**

In March 2020, Kris Brantley, an ATF agent in Alabama, noticed two unusual gun purchases—nine handguns on March 7 and five more on March 9 at Wade’s Jewelry & Pawn. The buyer was Demarcus Walker.

Under federal law, the ATF gets notified by dealers anytime someone buys two or more handguns within five days. Most don’t warrant follow-ups. But Mr. Walker’s transactions didn’t look like a typical purchase by a gun collector, which usually includes high-end firearms, Mr. Brantley said. Mr. Walker had only bought low-price pistols, including four Taurus .380s and two Taurus 9mms.

“These weren’t really collectible guns, so to me that’s odd,” said Mr. Brantley, 36.

Mr. Brantley visited Wade’s, where, he said, employees recounted how Mr. Walker told them he had just gotten his tax refund.

Wade Warbington, the shop’s owner, didn’t respond to requests for comment.

A few days later, Mr. Brantley got a call from an ATF agent in South Carolina. A state trooper had pulled over a 1999 Acura on the interstate for a lane violation and found 19 handguns in the trunk.

Fourteen of them traced back to Mr. Walker’s purchases on March 7 and 9, the agent told Mr. Brantley.

He began probing what looked like a larger gun trafficking operation. In May, he received a message from an ATF gun tracing center.

The tan-and-black Taurus that Mr. Walker purchased in November had shown up at a homicide scene in Boston.

### **Five shots**

Anthony Kelley bought the Taurus sometime between November and April, stashing the cardboard box it came in downstairs in the basement, according to a police report.

Barely 18, he lived with his grandmother in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood in a sea-green, three-story building. Mr. Kelley said a friend had been murdered and he bought the gun from someone out of state for protection, according to law-enforcement records.

His lawyers declined to comment.

Under federal law, Mr. Kelly was barred from purchasing a handgun from a licensed dealer until he turned 21. Under Massachusetts law, he couldn’t buy one through a private sale either until he turned 21. Massachusetts gun owners also need a permit to carry firearms in public.

In Alabama, an 18-year-old can buy a handgun through a private sale and no permit is needed to carry a firearm in public.

Prosecutors say that on the afternoon of April 15, Mr. Kelley had the Taurus in his pants pocket while walking near his home. In a police interview, Mr. Kelley said he noticed Ms. King walking nearby.

Ms. King was a talented point guard who took care of her friends in the neighborhood like a mother, said Leroy Peeples Jr., a youth mentor who does gang intervention work in Dorchester and knew her.

“Alissa was so nurturing to her friends. They all gravitated towards her,” said Mr. Peeples, recalling how happy Ms. King was after he helped her get a job at a supermarket.

Mr. Kelley and Ms. King knew each other from the neighborhood. Mr. Kelley told police that she was friends with his enemies and that he was concerned she was following him. He turned toward her and fired multiple times, according to his interview with police.

A single bullet struck Ms. King in the neck. She died on the street.

After a brief chase, police arrested Mr. Kelley and found the gun, they said.

Mr. Kelley is being held without bail on charges of murder, illegal possession of a firearm and possession of fentanyl, which police found while searching his room. He has pleaded not guilty.

Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and Police Commissioner William Gross rushed to the scene of the shooting. So did Mr. Peeples. He couldn't bring himself to look at Ms. King's body. Her mother, Alana Farrell, pleaded with him over the phone to tell her what had happened to her daughter.

In the weeks following Ms. King's killing, Mr. Brantley questioned Mr. Walker at his Tuscaloosa apartment. Mr. Walker was polite and friendly, the ATF agent said.

Most straw purchasers haven't gotten in trouble before, Mr. Brantley said. "Generally speaking, they're remorseful, they're sorry, they're like, 'That was a really dumb thing to do. I needed the money,' " he said.

Mr. Walker, Mr. Ward and several other men were indicted last year. Mr. Walker pleaded guilty to giving a false statement during the purchase of a firearm. He's awaiting sentencing. Another straw purchaser in the case received probation.

Mr. Ward received a 15-month prison sentence after pleading guilty to the same charge as Mr. Walker.

Feet away from where Alissa King was shot, wilted balloons hang from a lamppost wrapped in red tape. Someone scrawled "Alissa" in giant red letters on the street. Ms. King's mother said she visits the makeshift memorial every night. She posts constant tributes to her only child on Facebook.

"I know you can feel my tears this morning and don't want me to cry, yet my heart is broken because I still can't understand why he took your life," she wrote on the second anniversary of her daughter's death. She said she is still too grief-stricken to talk about it.

The tan-and-black Taurus used to kill Ms. King sits in an evidence room at Boston police headquarters, alongside other guns recovered from shootings.

"To see something that starts in a small town in Alabama, that's affecting families in Boston and taking the life of a 17-year-old, it's horrific," said Prim Escalona, the U.S. Attorney for Alabama's Northern District, whose office prosecuted the trafficking case.

"You never know the ripple effect that a small decision in a small town in Alabama may have, miles and miles away," she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Breonna Taylor death: 4 cops charged</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/04/breonna-taylor-death-louisville-police-officers-charged">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/04/breonna-taylor-death-louisville-police-officers-charged</a>
GIST	<p>The FBI on Thursday arrested and brought civil rights charges against four current and former Louisville police officers for their roles in the 2020 fatal shooting of <a href="#">Breonna Taylor</a>, a Black woman who was shot in her home in a case that rocked the US.</p> <p>Taylor, 26, was killed in Louisville, <a href="#">Kentucky</a> in March 2020, when police executed a no-knock warrant in a botched narcotics raid.</p> <p>Police shot Taylor multiple times after her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, fired at them on the assumption that they were intruders.</p> <p>Federal charges against former officers Joshua Jaynes, Brett Hankison and Kelly Goodlett, along with Sgt Kyle Meany were announced by Merrick Garland, the US attorney general, on Thursday.</p> <p>Announcing the charges on Thursday, Garland said the charges allege that the officers took steps to cover up unlawful conduct.</p> <p>Garland also said one officer was charged with wilfully using excessive force in the raid.</p>

	<p>Federal officials “share but cannot fully imagine the grief” felt by Taylor’s family, Garland said, adding: “Breonna Taylor should be alive today.”</p> <p>Hankison, who was dismissed from the department in 2020, was one of the officers at Taylor’s door and one of three who fired shots. Earlier this year in Louisville, he was acquitted by a jury of state charges of wanton endangerment.</p> <p>Jaynes applied for the warrant to search Taylor’s house. He was fired in January 2021 by the former Louisville police interim chief Yvette Gentry, for violating department standards in the preparation of a search warrant execution and for being “untruthful” in the Taylor warrant.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Russia court convicts, jails WNBA star 9yrs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/aug/04/russian-court-convicts-us-basketball-star-brittney-griner-on-drug-charges">https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/aug/04/russian-court-convicts-us-basketball-star-brittney-griner-on-drug-charges</a>
GIST	<p>A Moscow court has convicted US basketball star <a href="#">Brittney Griner</a> on drug charges and sentenced her to nine years in prison and a 1m rouble fine in a politically charged verdict that could lead to a prisoner swap with the United States.</p> <p>Griner, a basketball talent who played in <a href="#">Russia</a> during off-seasons from the Phoenix Mercury, was arrested for cannabis possession in Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport in February.</p> <p>Her arrest came just days before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, launching frantic backdoor negotiations between the United States and Russian intelligence services as her trial played out in a small courthouse just outside the Moscow city limits.</p> <p>Her formal conviction, which was a foregone conclusion, would be a necessary step towards a prisoner exchange with the US. US officials say Russia is seeking to exchange Griner and Paul Whelan, a former US marine arrested on spying charges in 2020, for the convicted arms dealer Viktor Bout.</p> <p>While she pleaded guilty to the drug charges, the United States has classified Griner as “wrongfully detained,” launching a negotiation process similar to hostage negotiations with Iran and other countries. A senior US embassy official attended Thursday’s hearing and verdict, where police spetsnaz and bomb-sniffing dogs patrolled the hallways.</p> <p>Prosecutors asked for a 9.5-year prison sentence for Griner and a hefty fine, nearly the maximum in her case.</p> <p>In an emotional closing statement on Thursday, Griner apologised to her teammates and told the courtroom that she had made an “honest mistake,” adding “that is why I plead guilty to my charges but I had no intent of breaking the law”.</p> <p>She has also rejected the political implications of her case, making an emotional appeal directly to the judge, Anna Sotnikova.</p> <p>“I know everybody keep talking about ‘political pawn’ and ‘politics,’ but I hope that is far from this courtroom,” she said, asking for leniency.</p> <p>In the end, it was not shown.</p> <p>Prosecutors handed her a 9-year prison sentence and a 1M rouble fine, a sentence more commonly associated with major drugs trafficking than Griner’s alleged possession of two canisters of cannabis oil for a vape pen weighing in under one gram.</p>



Prosecutors in the Russian court said Griner's arrest on drug charges was "fully proven". Her defence lawyers pointed toward irregularities in the investigation and described the pressures on the basketball star, whom she compared to the sprinter Usain Bolt.

A conviction is usually required in cases that could lead to a prisoner exchange, because it would allow the Kremlin to issue a pardon or reduce a sentence without blatantly interfering in an ongoing trial.

A lawyer for Whelan told the Guardian on Thursday that he was "sure that a trade will eventually be made", but added that that a final agreement did not seem to have been reached. He claimed that the US said that Russia offered a trade for Bout in 2020 shortly after Whelan's conviction on spying charges.

Russia is said to be seeking the freedom of Bout, a legendary arms dealer who is believed to have armed the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor's regime in Liberia, Unita in Angola, various Congolese factions and Abu Sayyaf, a militant Islamic group in the Philippines.

He was arrested at a luxury hotel in Bangkok in a US sting operation and was sentenced in 2012 to 25 years in prison. His case has become an unlikely cause célèbre among some senior Russian officials.

Russia has already exchanged Trevor Reed, a former marine arrested in Moscow, for Konstantin Yaroshenko, a pilot who was held for nearly a decade in the US on a drug smuggling conviction. The exchange at an airfield in Turkey recalled a cold war thriller, as the two men walked past each other to board planes back to their respective countries.

Griner has also said that she is "terrified" of being kept in Russia "forever".

"I never meant to hurt anybody," Griner said in her closing statement. "I never meant to put in jeopardy the Russian population. I never meant to break any laws here. I made an honest mistake and I hope that in your ruling that it doesn't end my life here."

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HEADLINE	08/05 Las Vegas hotel shooting: 1 dead, 2 injured
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/05/us/las-vegas-hotel-shooting-mirage-casino/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/05/us/las-vegas-hotel-shooting-mirage-casino/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)A shooting in a Las Vegas hotel room Thursday night left one man dead and two women in critical condition, police said.</p> <p>Around 8:30 p.m. local time, police responded to a 911 call about a shooting in a room at the Mirage Casino and Hotel, where they found a man had already died and two women were injured, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Captain Dori Koren said in a late-night news conference.</p> <p>Officers and security personnel immediately began providing medical attention to the surviving victims, who were transported to the hospital in critical condition, he said.</p> <p>Police are still searching for the suspect, Koren said, noting that the shooting appears to be an isolated incident and there is likely not a threat to the public. Investigators believe the four people knew each other, he said.</p> <p>Authorities preliminarily believe the suspect shot the three victims during an altercation in the room, though the investigation is still ongoing, Koren said.</p> <p>"These types of incidents --any types of extreme violence that happens in our city -- we take very seriously," Koren said. "We're confident we will solve this case."</p> <p>The police captain said that officers arrived on the scene within a minute of receiving the 911 call, Koren said.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>08/05 NM: SUV plows thru ceremonial parade</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/gallup-new-mexico-several-injured-after-suv-plows-through-ceremonial-parade">https://www.foxnews.com/us/gallup-new-mexico-several-injured-after-suv-plows-through-ceremonial-parade</a>
GIST	<p>A vehicle drove through a ceremonial parade in <a href="#">New Mexico</a>, leaving several people, including two police officers, with injuries.</p> <p>The New Mexico State Police said an SUV drove through the annual Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial parade in downtown Gallup on Thursday. The driver was arrested at the scene.</p> <p>Witnesses at the scene said there were at least two passengers in the SUV when it drove through the parade route.</p> <p>According to New Mexico State Police, multiple pedestrians were hurt and were being treated at the scene.</p> <p>Two <a href="#">Gallup police officers</a> were among those who were injured and were also being treated at the scene, New Mexico police said.</p> <p>Videos of the incident on social media showed crowds of people running away from the brown SUV as it went through the parade at a high rate of speed.</p> <p>Further video shows officers surrounding the SUV. Officers then moved in and pull people out and onto the ground.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Uvalde chief demoted in previous position</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/arredondo-demoted-previous-law-enforcement-position-report/story?id=87939285">https://abcnews.go.com/US/arredondo-demoted-previous-law-enforcement-position-report/story?id=87939285</a>
GIST	<p>Eight years before Uvalde school Police Chief Pete Arredondo led the controversial law enforcement response to the <a href="#">mass shooting</a> at Robb Elementary School, he was demoted from a high-ranking position at the Webb County Sheriff's Office, according to reporting by a local news outlet Thursday.</p> <p>Arredondo "couldn't get along with people," Webb County Sheriff Martin Cuellar told the <a href="#">San Antonio Express-News</a>, according to the report. Cuellar also said that he demoted Arredondo from assistant chief to commander in 2014.</p> <p>"He just didn't fit the qualifications or the work that I set out for him," Cuellar said, according to the report.</p> <p>Arredondo has come under immense scrutiny for his role in the police response to the May 24 massacre, which claimed the lives of 19 children and two teachers. Police <a href="#">waited 77 minutes</a> after arriving at the school to breach the door to the classroom containing the 18-year-old gunman.</p> <p>A special committee in the Texas legislature <a href="#">issued a report</a> last month that found Arredondo had "failed to perform or to transfer to another person the role of incident commander."</p> <p>Arredondo previously <a href="#">told the Texas Tribune</a> that he did not consider himself the on-scene commander during the shooting.</p> <p>According to documents first reported by the San Antonio Express-News and obtained by ABC News, Arredondo, while working for Webb County, was "reassigned from Assistant Chief to Commander" in October 2014, and that two days earlier, a Webb County employee had written "demotion" on his payroll worksheet.</p>

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>Arredondo left the Webb County Sheriff's Office in 2017 and took a role in Laredo as a school district police captain, where he stayed for three years. When he applied for the position in Laredo, Arredondo highlighted his role in a hostage negotiation during his time in Webb County.</p> <p>Cuellar, the Webb County sheriff who demoted Arredondo in 2014, told the San Antonio Express-News that Arredondo "exaggerated a little bit" his role in the hostage negotiations he mentioned in his application to Laredo.</p> <p>"It wasn't him completely. I think he exaggerated a little bit," Cuellar was quoted telling the newspaper, adding that it was a team effort.</p> <p>Arredondo was announced as the new police chief of the Uvalde Independent School District in February 2020.</p> <p>Neither Arredondo or Cuellar, or officials with the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District, immediately responded to ABC News' requests for comment.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/04 Police: shots fired Mall of America</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/mall-america-lockdown-shots-fired-police/story?id=87951067">https://abcnews.go.com/US/mall-america-lockdown-shots-fired-police/story?id=87951067</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Shoppers were sent running for safety at the Mall of America Thursday, after police said shots were fired at the Minnesota shopping center.</p> <p>Police responded to an "active incident" on the northwest side of the mall Thursday evening, the Bloomington Police Department <a href="#">tweeted</a>, saying at that time that "numerous officers are on scene."</p> <p>Within an hour, the police department said officers had <a href="#">secured the scene</a>. A suspect has not been apprehended, and no injuries have been reported, police said.</p> <p>Bloomington Police Department Chief Booker Hodges said during a press conference that shots were fired near the Nike store, and that officers on the scene within 30 seconds.</p> <p>"After looking at video, we see two groups getting into some type of altercation at the cash register of the Nike store," Hodges said. "One of the groups left but instead of walking away, they decided to display a complete lack of respect for human life -- they decided to fire multiple rounds into a store with people."</p> <p>The individuals responsible have not yet been located, the chief said.</p> <p>"This is an isolated incident," the department said on Twitter. "The suspect fled the MOA on foot and officers are in the process of interviewing witnesses."</p> <p>The Mall of America alerted via Twitter that it was on lockdown "following a confirmed isolated incident" at one of its tenant spaces.</p> <p>Footage taken by shoppers showed people sheltering in place, including a large crowd in the basement of the mall.</p> <p>The lockdown has since been lifted. Shoppers on the mall's second level have been asked to wait for an escort, while all others were advised to leave.</p> <p>The mall will be closed for the rest of the evening.</p> <p>The shopping mall is located in Bloomington, a suburb of the Twin Cities.</p>

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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Nebraska: home explosion, fires; 4 dead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/people-found-dead-reports-explosion-fires-nebraska-homes/story?id=87943591">https://abcnews.go.com/US/people-found-dead-reports-explosion-fires-nebraska-homes/story?id=87943591</a>
GIST	<p>Foul play is suspected after four people were found dead at multiple homes in a small Nebraska town Thursday morning following reports of an explosion and fires, authorities said.</p> <p>A suspect in the case is at large, Nebraska State Patrol Superintendent Col. John Bolduc said during a press briefing Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Bolduc said state and local authorities are "investigating multiple crime scenes" in Laurel, in northeastern Nebraska.</p> <p>Authorities first responded to a home shortly after 3 a.m. after a 911 caller reported an explosion at the residence, Bolduc said. There was a fire at the home, he said.</p> <p>Once inside, responding officers and deputies found one person dead, he said.</p> <p>While at the first home, a fire was reported at a second home three blocks away, Bolduc said. Three people were found dead inside that home, he said.</p> <p>Bolduc said foul play is suspected in the four deaths, and that responders at the second home worked to preserve any evidence while putting out the fire.</p> <p>Authorities are searching for a silver sedan in connection with the investigation, Bolduc said. The car was reported leaving Laurel shortly after the second fire was reported, and the male driver may have picked up a passenger before leaving the town, he said.</p> <p>Fire investigators believe that accelerants may have been used in both fires at the homes, said Bolduc, noting that the suspect or suspects may have burn injuries.</p> <p>Authorities are working with local residents and businesses to obtain any relevant security camera footage as part of their investigation.</p> <p>The identities of the victims will be released pending family notification, and a cause of death will be determined following an autopsy, Bolduc said.</p> <p>It is too early in the investigation to determine any connection between the victims, or if this can be characterized as a domestic incident, Bolduc said.</p> <p>Cedar County Sheriff Larry Koranda said the community of 1,000 is shaken by what happened.</p> <p>"Everybody knows everybody in this small community," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/04 Threatening emails to federal officials: 3yrs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/man-threatened-dr-fauci-official-years-87954758">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/man-threatened-dr-fauci-official-years-87954758</a>
GIST	<p>GREENBELT, Md. -- A West Virginia man was sentenced Thursday to three years in federal prison after he sent emails threatening Dr. Anthony Fauci and another federal health official for talking about the coronavirus and efforts to prevent its spread.</p> <p>Using an anonymous email account based in Switzerland, Thomas Patrick Connally, Jr. threatened to kill Fauci or members of his family, the U.S. Department of Justice said in a news release. One of his messages said they would be "dragged into the street, beaten to death, and set on fire."</p> <p>Another email said Fauci would be "hunted, captured, tortured and killed," according to court records.</p>

Fauci is President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which is part of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. Fauci has been a vocal supporter of vaccines and other preventive measures against COVID-19. He said he expects to retire at the end of Biden's current term.

Another target was Dr. Francis Collins, who was director of NIH at the time of Connally's threats. Collins and his family were threatened with physical assault and death if Collins continued to speak about the need for "mandatory" COVID-19 vaccinations, the Justice Department said.

Connally also admitted to sending emails threatening Dr. Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania's then-Secretary of Health, the Justice Department said. An unidentified public health official in Massachusetts and a religious leader in New Jersey were also threatened.

"Everyone has the right to disagree, but you do not have the right to threaten a federal official's life," Erek L. Barron, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland, said in a statement.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis sentenced Connally to 37 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release. Connally most recently lived in Snowshoe, West Virginia.

He was arrested last summer, and pleaded guilty in May to making threats against a federal official.

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